METRO / A17
Lacson drops out of Manila mayoral race due to residency requirements

SPORTS / A21
Promoter Arum gives Barrera deadline to fight Pacquiao

WORLD / A20
New Year bomb blasts in Bangkok kill three, hurt 38, including 9 foreigners

NEWS / A2
Philippine Navy rescues 50 fishermen held by armed men off Tawi-Tawi

Bilibid 'Starbucks' offers coffee, bread, livelihood

By Jocelyn R. Uy

INMATES LANGUISHING in the maximum security compound of the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City will soon be able to indulge their craving for latte, cappuccino and sweets.

BILIBID A13

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, January 2, 2007 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 25 P18 www.inquirer.net

'2007 election crucial to end political crisis'

By Michael Lim Ubac and Christine O. Avendaño

MAJORITY AND OPPOSITION LEADERS IN THE House of Representatives agreed yesterday that the midterm elections in May would play a crucial part in ending the political crisis that has bedeviled the country for nearly two years.

They said the coming elections would set the

2007 ELECTION A15

GI case likened to Garci

New Year toll: 907 injured, no deaths from firecrackers

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE NEWLY BOUGHT "BOGA" seemed a dud. All that the 37-year-old woman heard was the familiar click of the trigger, not the vaunted blast the vendor had told her it could cause.

Frustrated, she held the cannon-like device fashioned out of a PVC pipe next to her ear and pulled the trigger again.

Off went the boga, sending the entire left part of her face...

Call it plain stupidity or recklessness. Like the case of a 10-year-old boy who lit up a whistle bomb he had placed inside his boga, apparently trying to use the pipe as a launcher.

The firecracker exploded without the familiar warning whistle, severing his right ear.

If it's any consolation, neither the woman nor the boy was among at least 50 Filipinos who welcomed the New Year with missing fingers or hands.

Altogether, 907 people were injured in revelry to welcome 2007, the Department of Health said yesterday. There was still no final figure on casualties as of press time.

While no one was killed by firecracker blasts—which was "good news," according to Health Secretary Francisco Duque III—at least 14 people died in fires or in violence apparently mostly related to the yearend merrymaking around the country. (For related story on Page A4)

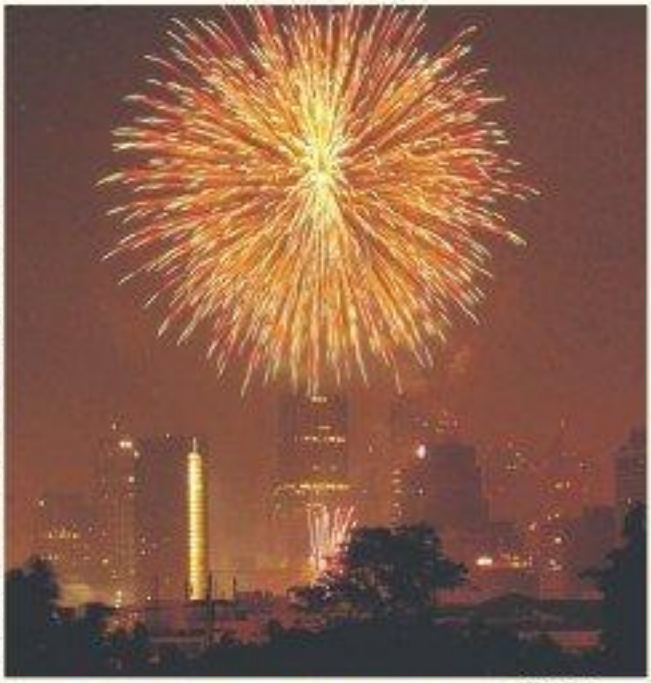
In one incident in Pasay City, one man was killed and nine people were wounded when gunmen on a motorcycle open fired on people holding a street party. (See related story in Metro, Page A17).

The two incidents involving the women and the boy playing with the boga were treated in the Inquirer by a Department of Health official.

The boga is a homemade contraption made out of PVC pipes using denatured alcohol for its incendiary element.

The number of injuries, covering

NEW YEAR A4



SPARKLERS, splendidly humongous and unless small, fears Ayala Avenue in Makati City as a horse in Tondo with Gabby and Lance, the fight that cannot forth is the very same, full of prayers and magic and dreams.

Smith issue adds to GMA political crisis, says Pimentel

By TJ Burgonio, Armand N. Nocum and Norman Bordadora

SENATE MINORITY LEADER Aquilino Pimentel Jr. expects 2007 to be more politically turbulent than the year that just ended because of the administration's mishandling of the custody case of US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

Smith was convicted of raping a young Filipina woman on Dec. 4 last year, sentenced to life imprisonment and ordered detained at the Makati City Jail.

Pimentel said the government's order transferring Smith from the Makati City Jail to US custody close to midnight of Dec. 29 without court authorization would be a fresh point this year.

"The impasse over Gloria's legitimacy will come to a head. A number of circumstances will trigger this collision," Pimentel told in an interview.

The opposition claims that President Macapagal-Arroyo stole the 2004 presidential election.

Today, the legal team that opposed Smith's bid to be returned to US custody will ask the Court of Appeals to cite Smith and several Filipino officials for contempt because of his transfer from the Makati City Jail.

Lawyer Harry Roque, an international legal studies expert and a member of the legal team helping private complainant "Nicole," the rape victim, said Smith's move to the US Embassy was a gross disrespect to the appeals court that has yet to decide on the custody's pending appeal to be returned to US custody in accordance with the Visiting Forces Agreement.

"They moved him without waiting for the decision of the court," Roque told the Inquirer.

Roque said that aside from Smith, others who may have been in contempt of the court were Executive Secretary Eduardo

SMITH A13

2006 one of deadliest for journalists

JOURNALISTS SUFFERED ONE OF THEIR deadliest years ever in 2006, with Iraq, the Philippines and Mexico proving the most dangerous places in the world for the media to work in, two media watchdogs said Saturday.

The Paris-based Reporters sans Frontieres (Reporters Without Borders) said the year saw violent deaths of 81 journalists worldwide, the bloodiest since 1994 when 140 died.

The Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)—which does not separate reporters from their media staff—went much further, saying 2006 was the worst ever, with at least 155 murders, assassinations and unexplained deaths.

"Media have become more powerful and journalism has become more dangerous," said Aidan White, IFJ general secretary. "2006 was the worst year on record—a year of targeting, brutality and continued impunity in the killing

2006 A4

World parties from Times Square to Mt. Fuji

NEW YORK—MORE THAN ONE MILlion revelers in Times Square greeted 2007 with cheers, kisses and a whopping 5.3 tons of confetti as the city's massive New Year's Eve party.

It was a scene repeated, with some variations, around the globe as millions cheered impressive fireworks celebrations while others saw 2006 capped by bombings and death.

New York's famously flashy New Year's Eve ball dropped down a flagpole to a countdown chorus led by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and US newsmen and women. Longtime host Dick Clark ticked off the final 10 seconds from a television studio.

Partygoers from all over the world poured into the area hours before the clock struck 12 to hold prime viewing spots.

As the ball dropped, Amanda Bermudez, 19, kissed her new husband, Angel Bermudez, 21, a US Army soldier who recently returned from Iraq. They were married Dec. 2 at their home in Fort Hood, Texas, and came to New York for their honeymoon.

"My New Year's resolution is to work on my marriage and be a good mother," said Amanda Bermudez, who just found out she's pregnant.

She also hoped for peace in the Middle East in 2007.

"So he doesn't have to go back," she said, glancing lovingly at her husband.

Police, providing security for the huge crowd, said everything went according to plan. Spectators passed through police checkpoints, no big bags or backpacks were permitted and bomb-sniffing dogs scoured the crowd.

Actor Smith and his family traveled from Johannesburg, South Africa, for the event. They waited nearly 12 hours to watch the ball drop.

"This is the best place in the world to

WORLD A5

Another Bayan Muna leader shot dead

By Ephraim Aguilar
Inquirer Southern Luzon
and Michael Lucban
Correspondent

LEGAZPI CITY—RODOLFO "OMPONG" Alvarado, the Bayan Muna provincial coordinator in Albay, knew his days were numbered, his widow said.

Alvarado, 53, was shot dead inside his car on Dec. 31 in Ligao City.

"My father expected his death. While we were watching the news on television on the death of another Bayan Muna

RODOLFO ALVARADO, Bayan Muna provincial coordinator in Albay, expected to die the way he did.

ANOTHER A15

A2
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Second FRONTPAGE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2007

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY: Ashes and feathers from ash eruptions shall rain with scattered rainshowers while thunder and lightning shall rain with rainshowers and thunderstorms in Metro Manila and the eastern Visayas and Mindanao. The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with light rainshowers.

50 'detained' fishermen rescued

By Charlie C. Señase, Reginald Mendiosa and Dona Pazdiagan and Manny Carvajal

THE PHILIPPINE NAVY SAID IT RESCUED YESterday 50 fishermen who were held for more than 24 hours by armed men in the high seas off Tawi-Tawi, demanding a ransom from their employer.

The armed men, who claimed to be from the Regional Party Management Institute of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in Tawi-Tawi (Ind) videotaped the fishermen's ordeal, Navy Commander Ricardo Gloria said.

He said there was no exchange of gunfire as the armed men returned to their motorboat and fled.

According to Ricardo, the boys ships (seven fishboats) owned by Lim Fishing and Trading Inc., the owner of the two boats, the Bad Uzula II and the Queen Bee.

The company reported that seven gunmen boarded the two boats near Bandingan Tabalan Island off Tawi-tawi on Sunday morning and announced that they were holding the 50 men hostage.

It said the gunmen destroyed the fishing boats' radio equipment and demanded a ransom of P500,000 from Irma Fishing, owned by Bobby del Rosario of Navotas.

Irma Fishing operations vice-president Cesar Segale said the company was able to trace the boats' location through a global positioning system (GPS) installed in all the company's vessels and alerted the military's Western Mindanao Command.

In Zamboanga City, Commodore Geronimo Debenson, commander of Naval forces Western Mindanao, said the gunmen were led by a certain Sirat Bansil who demanded P500,000 for the release of the fishermen.

Debenson said the gunmen were not pirates but were members of the ARMM's Regional Party Management Authority.

Melanding Angeles, the RPMA-ARMM administrator, denied that there was a demand made for a P500,000 ransom. He said his men apprehended two fishing boats operating inside restricted fishing grounds.

"We found out that their permit only covered Bilatwan and Sulu and not Tawi-Tawi. My instruction to the unit is to charge and demand port dues and let them go after paying," Angeles said.

He also confirmed that Bansil was the head of the RPMA-ARMM task force in Tawi-Tawi that collects port, anchorage, usage and wharfage fees.

Debenson said, however, that the Irma fishing boats had a permit to operate in the ARMM.

"I don't think there was a miscommunication last Saturday. If the armed violators' permit have the signature of their permit, they should not have been apprehended immediately. If there are fees required, it was probably just minimal, not half a million pesos," Debenson said.

Angeles quoted unnamed officials of the RPMA-ARMM as saying that their office had sustained many times before to return money from big fishing boats operating in their area.

He said the executives demanded money as "anchorage fee" from the boats.

TAWI TAWI RESCUE

P200 airport security fee starts this month

THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT authority is intent on imposing a P200 security and development fee on international passengers starting this month but does not quite know how to go about collecting it.

"We want to have the fee implemented in the airline tickets but we still haven't gotten word from the airlines if they've made a decision," Oscar Peter, senior assistant general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa).

Peters said that the inclusion of the fee in the airline tickets would prevent "long lines" at the terminal fee booths.

But if the airlines refuse to take responsibility by collecting the security fee by including it in the airline ticket, the Miaa might just have to ask passengers to pay the P200 security fee at the same booths where they pay the P550 terminal fee.

Last year, airlines operating out of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Dubai expressed reservations not only about including the service fee in the airline ticket but also about the idea of additional charges being imposed on airline passengers.

They said passengers should not be burdened with the government's obligation to keep a vital installation like the Naia safe.

But the Miaa said it needed the funds for the upgrading and maintenance of the security equipment at the international airport terminals.

The Miaa would like to start collecting the security fee not later than Jan. 15, according to Rafaen Uy, executive assistant in the Miaa general manager.

Overseas Filipino workers will be exempt from paying the security fee, which is expected to generate some P750 million annually. Miko Dizon

BURNED CHURCH ONLY the wooden pews remain after fire triggered by firecrackers razed the church inside Pinamucklan subdivision in Las Piñas during the New Year's Eve celebrations. (Story on Metro, Page A17) Inset photo

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KIDNAPPING DEBATE

Do you want rescuers to come in with guns blazing, or pay ransom?

NEW YORK—HERE IS A LESSON IN 'GRIM economics:' Ensure a kidnap victim in a third world country. Do you want rescuers to come in with guns blazing, or pay a ransom?

Hobbs-style rescues work—about half the time. The rest of the time, innocents, the victim dies in a hail of bullets. When kidnappers are paid off, the odds of survival improve dramatically.

David Lantis, who handles kidnap and ransom cases for St. Paul Travelers Companies Inc., said that in the 175 cases he has been involved in since 1991, only one person has been killed. And, even though he is a former lieutenant colonel in the US Marines, he has never lived a gun to anyone.

The debate on force versus payoff has set insurers on both sides.

Both the United States and Israel have a blanket policy of refusing to negotiate with those it calls terrorists.

Corporations, on the other hand, say their first responsibility is the safe return of the victim.

Lantis doesn't debate the policies. He just works through them. "We won't give advice that 'everyone else has always paid ransom,' or threaten to the local authorities, they will likely allow you to negotiate," said the soft-spoken, bearded and bespectacled Lantis.

Daniel he encourage kidnappers by paying them off—"no, if you pay them $1.6 million," Lantis says. But negotiation itself sent nothing.

"We use the 'can you help me' scenario," he said. "We say, 'Call me in a week.' We show that the company won't be an easy target." Kidnappers generally play along. Their victim is a resource, and the captors get nothing by killing. "We assess their motivations," Lantis said. "If it's money we make them more profit."

Sometimes it is not money. In 2004, a Taiwanese executive disappeared from an airport in Bangladesh and was apparently being held illegally in a local jail. A story in a Singapore newspaper implying that Bangladesh was not a safe place to do business was enough to get him released immediately, Lantis said.

Lantis is willing to make concessions even in the toughest of circles, and it has paid off. In 1992 he was the head of an insurgency group signing autographs to an airport in Davao City in the Philippines. Lantis grabbed the same flight, sat down with the insurgents and got friendly. He even got the leader's autograph on a postcard, including a "Dear David" salutation.

Later he handled a company facing extortion by the same insurgent group. He showed a copy of the card to the local union leader, who sent it to the group's top leadership. The extortion ended the same day, Lantis said.

Sometimes the payment is small. When Haitian gunmen kidnapped two Canadians off the street of Port-au-Prince, it took only a week to get them released. The thugs had demanded $2 million. They got $4,000. In another case, the kidnap ended when the abductors' conditions were published in the local newspaper.

Lantis said he always uses local riders to communicate with the abductors. In one case, a company in Mexico hired a former FBI agent from Ontario then who stumbled when translating the kidnappers' demands. "They spontaneously said, 'Who's the Rican?'" Lantis recalled.

The local communicator has a script for each contact with the kidnappers, and cannot deviate from it. The communicator also does not know the end game, only as how much the company might be willing to pay. The game can be played for over 90 days, weeks or even months.

Lantis, 53, lives in Wallowa, Oregon, and spends a lot of time traveling, since a local negotiator is required at the scene as well as one at corporate headquarters. In his de Janeiro abduction case, he was on call for 48 hours. In Colombia the case lasted for nine months, he said.

Despite eschewing a swashbuckler image, Lantis is well known in the industry and director Taylor Hackford asked him to review the script of his 2000 movie on kidnapping, "Proof of Life," which stars Russell Crowe.

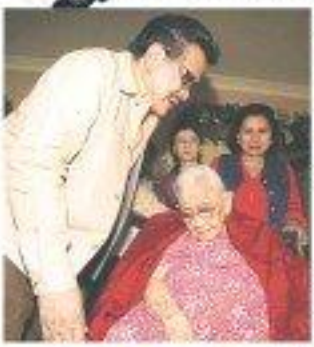
Lantis said the script was accurate until the divorce at the end. "That was pure Hollywood," he said. REUTERS

PRESIDENTIAL FAMILIES

The Holidays with Presidential Families

INNOCENCE AND LAUGHTER AT THE MANSION
GRANDCHILDREN of President Arroyo, Jose (left) and Miranda aram the New Year's Day at the Mansion House in Baguio City where the Arroyos welcomed the New Year.

OMA FAMILY
THE ARROYOS are a happily inviting and close-knit group which was also the First Family's Christmas card. From left, Juan Miguel "Miguy" Arroyo and wife Angela with their daughters Eva Evangelista and Miranda Gloria, Luli, Mr. Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, President Arroyo and Diosdado "Dado" Arroyo with Rahul and daughter Ava Victoria.



ERAP VISITS MOTHER
ERAP goes home to visit his 102-year-old mother. Story on Page A2

THE RAMOSES
The former President Fidel V. Ramos and wife Ming (second, left and right) get together with the staff of the Ramos Peace and Development Foundation during the holidays. "The period between Christmas and New Year is a specially long week for the Ramos family." FVR tells PDI because the ex-first lady's birthday falls on Dec. 31. So, there's an "overdose" of celebrations during this season.

CORY AQUINO FAMILY
THE AQUINOS pose for their 2006 Christmas photo. Standing, from left: Noynoy Aquino, Jerry Cruz, Manolo Abellada, Eldon Cruz, Iggy Cruz, Miguel Abellada, Dodo Cruz, Kiko Cruz, Kris Aquino-Yap, James Yap. Sitting, from left: Bailey Aquino-Cruz, Nina Abellada, Viel Aquino-Cruz, Jo Dee, Cory Aquino, Joshua Aquino, Pinky Aquino-Abellada.

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A VIEW FROM MANDALUYONG at the approach of the magic hour typifies the metropolis' craze for excitement and explosive mood for celebration. *Inset photo*

New Year's Day in Metro ...

LIKE MOST PEOPLE AROUND the country, residents of Metro Manila welcomed the New Year in a raucous way.

■ QUEZON CITY - In a less than auspicious start to the New Year, 70 merrymakers in Quezon City spent the first day of 2007 in hospitals after being injured by firecracker blasts, police said.

In separate tragedies, two men were killed in shooting and stabbing incidents on a New Year's Day.

One of the victims was an unidentified man found slumped on the pavement along Hilltop to Street, Barangay Commonwealth. He had a bullet wound in the right temple and he died at the scene before police arrived.

Police initially thought the man might have been hit by some bullets fired as the height of the celebration, but witnesses later told them the victim had been involved in a drunken brawl with another person.

Two fires damaged some houses in Quezon City minutes after midnight.

Arson investigators said they suspected both fires were started by firecrackers thrown through the windows.

■ CALOOCAN - Three people, people were killed in separate incidents in Caloocan. A total of 123 others were also injured in the northern part of the metropolis due to stray bullets and firecrackers.

Brothers Eduardo and Jojit Bautista were trying to buy fireworks on a street in Bagong Silang when they were suddenly hit by two men, who escaped. Both cards were instantly killed while his brother was seriously injured.

Juanito Bandola, 47, was also operating an unregulated firecracker in front of his house when he was fatally stabbed in the chest.

+ MANILA: There was a slight increase in the number of firecracker-related injuries in Manila this year.

Dr. Ina Barcenilla, city health officer, said there were at least 25 people injured by firecrackers. He said this was 8 persons more than number of cases reported last year.

Barcenilla said about 30 percent of this year's victims had eye injuries. The rest suffered burns on some of the hips, accompanied cannon.

Barcenilla also disclosed that there were at least two victims of stray bullets.

Dr. Frederick Gaerge, senior house officer of the Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center said the hospital treated 50 persons for firecracker-related injuries...including eight people who sustained wounds from stray bullets between midnight and 1 a.m. yesterday.

+ EASTERN DISTRICT: Although police had ordered tough measures against the use of powerful firecrackers days before the New Year, at least 79 people ended up being injured by firecracker blasts.

Thirty people were hurt in Marikina-only, 35 in Marikina, 12 in San Juan and eight in Pasig. Police reports from all Mayor Jimmy Carvajal, Tina Santos, Margaux Ortiz and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

From page A1

the period from Dec. 21 until yesterday, represented a 48-percent increase from the 618 cases reported during the same period a year ago.

Going by the latest number of victims, the latest figures of the raucous New Year celebrations apparently hadn't sunk in for many Filipinos.

Of the total casualties, 870 were injured by firecracker blasts, 33 by stray bullets, while two were those who injured by the highly toxic "senior" Manila firecrackers, the DOH said.

Mix of good and bad

On New Year's Eve alone, 624 persons were reported, a 72-percent increase from the 448 cases reported on New Year's Eve in 2005.

"We have a mix of good and bad news this year," Duque said in a press conference at the East Avenue Medical Center, one of 30 medical facilities designated to receive victims of firecracker explosions.

The good news, he said, was that the DOH recorded no deaths from firecrackers and stray bullets. The number of "treated" victims fell from 18 in 2005 to twelve for the last count.

Duque said the bad news was that the number of stray bullet victims rose from 19 in 2005 to 33 this year.

Curiously, the Philippine National Police recorded only 13 stray bullet injuries from Dec. 16 until yesterday.

Duque suggested there was a discrepancy between the DOH and PNP figures because most of the stray bullet victims preferred to simply seek medical help rather than report the incidents to the police.

Duque offered theories on explain the nearly 50-percent increase in the number of injuries related to the merrymaking.

Besides the improved reporting by government hospitals, he said the fact that influx of dollar remittances from abroad, along with a supposedly improved economy, may have spurred more Filipinos to splurge on fireworks.

'More money to burn'

"People had more money to burn," he said. "Perhaps this more types of firecrackers, and cheaper ones at that, entered the market."

Citing a recent survey indicating that more Filipinos were hopeful in the New Year, he said they might have expressed their optimism by taking part in noisy revelries.

Thus the increase in the number of firecracker casualties.

According to DOH records, 36 people either lost a finger or a hand because of firecrackers. Eye injuries numbered at least 148, with most of the cases caused by "piccolo" (261), "lolo" (123) and the "five-star" firecrackers (26).

Most of the surgeries were stitches (111), "burns" (51), "fine star" (41) and "crying eye" (41).

Dangerous firecrackers

In all, the following firecrackers and pyrotechnic devices caused the most number of injuries: "kwitis" (167), "piccolo" (99), "five star" (82), "kwiz" (64) and "judy pla" (52).

Of the firecracker victims, 281 were bystanders and 484 were male, at least 131 victims were under the influence of alcohol.

Quite alarming for the DOH was the report that 29 percent of the victims of firecracker explosions were younger than 10 years old.

The DOH had banned firecracker use, particularly that of "piccolo," by children under 15 years old.

Crackdown on loga

Considering the increase in the number of firecracker injuries, the DOH recommended a crackdown and crackdown on "loga."

The DOH also wanted a "total ban on all firecrackers and pyrotechnic device for undetermined."

Duque repeated warnings, law enforcers, use security guard and that civilians were to guarded to have fired their guns indiscriminately in the run-up to the New Year celebrations, particularly between reaching Camp Crame decreed.

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said all were had been arrested.

"The two policemen are already facing administrative and criminal charges for illegal discharge of firearms and conduct unbecoming a policeman, if found guilty, they will be dismissed from the force," Pagdilao said.

The PNP reports said among the civilians arrested by stray bullets were residents of Manila, Cebu, Davao City, Cavite, Pangasinan and Bataan City.

One vehicle suffered damage from a stray bullet in Makati City.

The DOH also reported the confiscation of thousands of 499 pieces of the banned but popular "OVC logo." NOB reports from Alexis Pape and Edson C. Tandoc

New Year toll: 907 ...

From page A1

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... And across the nation

HERE IS HOW THE NEW YEAR arrived elsewhere in the country, LUZON:

■ Two people were killed in a New Year's eve fire in Cagayan while at least 150 people were injured here in firecracker-related injuries during festivities in North-eastern Cordillera Luzon.

Five also hit a commercial district in Baliuag, Bulacan, on Monday morning, and a close scene at the public market of Tuguegarao, Cagayan, on Sunday night.

At least two people in Mangaldan and Bolinao were struck by stray bullets during the celebration.

In Cagayan, Senior Supt. James Anders Michel, provincial police director, said Henry Bisnar and his partner, Leonilo Malana, were killed when their house in Amulung town was pelted by a five-inch Sunday night.

Michel said Bisnar and Malana were sleeping when the fire, believed to have started in a pile of firecrackers that they were selling in a store in their house, broke out at 9 p.m.

In Bangabangan, at least 3.6 people were hurt during the revelry.

Boga victims

In Bulacan, at least 73 people were hurt from firecracker blasts and accidents from the use of the banned PVC "boga" (improvised cannon).

In Zambales, 11 people were reported hurt during the revelry. Police reported eight victims in Subic.

Deadly fire

In Nueva Ecija, at least 15 people were reported hurt from firecracker-related incidents.

In the Cordillera, the Department of Health reported 11 cases of firecracker-related injuries.

■ One person was reported killed in Paete, Laguna after a fire razed an apartment building a few minutes after midnight.

Police said the fire caused a "two-hour" power outage that affected Paete and the nearby towns of Pakil, Pangil and Kalayaan.

Initial police reports said fireworks triggered the fire.

VISAYAS

■ The number of victims of firecracker blasts in the Visayas dropped but health authorities noted a rise in stray bullet incidents in Cebu.

Five were injured by stray bullets in Cebu during the holiday season.

In Iloilo, 126 people became victims of firecracker blasts in the Visayas.

In the case of Central Visayas, however, its 99 blast victims represented a 46 percent drop compared to cases reported in the 2005 holiday festivities, the DOH-7 said.

Stabbing and shooting

But stabbing and shooting incidents during the New Year revelry claimed the lives of six people across Negros Occidental.

In Negros Oriental, the DOH reported 23 blast victims. With reports from *Villamor Visaya Jr., Tarra Quismorio-Figueroa, Gabriel Candameo and Desiree Cabais, Inquirer Northern Luzon; Carmela Reyes, Analiza Reyes, Gwen Wilo and Rosario Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon; Romuyla Peñaz, Inquirer Southern Luzon; and Jerome Ingal, Jhesset Enano, Carlo Gomez, Nestor Burgos Jr. and Joey A. Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas*

2006 one of deadliest for ...

From page A1

of journalists."

New world record

The discrepancy in the figures of the two agencies is due to variations in criteria. In its report, IFJ made a point of stating that unlike other organizations, it "includes journalists in its death count only when it is certain that their deaths are linked to their work as journalists. The organizations and deaths of other cases were not included in their count because investigators have not yet determined the motives or because they were not related to the duties of journalists."

The IFJ, on the other hand, noted that in many cases, media organizations and victims' families are still waiting for independent and credible reports about what happened.

NGO researchers noted that 36 media staff were kidnapped during 2006, chiefly in the Gaza Strip and Iraq, where 17 were seized, six of them killed. Thirty-two media assistants, including drivers, translators, technicians and security staff, were also killed, compared to only five in 2005.

In terms of arrests and harassment, IFJ lists 871 reporters arrested in 2006 and at least 1,431 attacks or threats registered against the media around the world—a new record.

Iraq worse than Vietnam

For the fourth year running, Iraq claimed the highest number of deaths, with 38 journalists killed there against 24 in 2005, according to IFJ. Another 12 media assistants had also died in Iraq in 2006. The IFJ put the Iraq toll at 68 for this year.

"Since the beginning of the war [in 2003], 139 journalists have been killed in Iraq, more than double the number of journalists killed during 20 years of war in Vietnam," the IFJ report said.

"In almost 90 percent of cases, the victims have been Iraqi journalists working for Iraqi and Arab media," the report added.

RP-Mexico vie for 2nd place

IFJ said the second most dangerous place for reporters this year was Mexico, which had overtaken Colombia to become the deadliest country for the media in the Americas. The IFJ said nine reporters were killed in Mexico in 2006 while trying to investigate drug traffickers or cover social unrest.

In the IFJ count, however, the Philippines ranked in second with 12 journalists killed this year. Only Iraq has the same number of media murders, up from 10 killed in 2005. Mexico is third with 9 killed.

The NGO reported no deaths for the Philippines, in what most deadly country down sun in 2005.

Election-related violence

Russia also proved dangerous, with three journalists killed there, including Anna Politkovskaya, a critic of President Vladimir Putin, who was shot dead in Moscow in October.

IFJ said the high number of threats and attacks against the media was partly explained by the number of election campaigns this year, with reporters targeted in Peru, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, Belarus, Uganda and Ethiopia.

IFJ said the number of registered cases of censorship fell to 91.2 this year from 1,006 in 2005, with the situation in Nepal notably improving.

However, it added that the Internet remained tightly controlled in many countries, with 13 states included as "enemies of the Web": Saudi Arabia, Belarus, Burma, China, North Korea, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, Uzbekistan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkmenistan and Vietnam.

UN condemnation

The only positive sign came in the final days of the year, said the IFJ, when the United Nations, for the first time ever, issued a statement condemning the killing of journalists and calling for prosecution of the killers of media staff.

"This was the only bright spot in a year of unremitting gloom," said White. "For the first time the United Nations has put the focus not on disputing media crisis. It is long overdue. We want to see action against countries that allow impunity in the killing of journalists."

For the last three years the IFJ has organized a day of protest on April 26—the day in 2003 when three journalists died under US fire in Baghdad.

Reuters, AFP

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World parties from Times Square to Mount Fuji

From page A1

sing in the new year," he said. "The spirit of the place is rousing. Mind-numbing beats."

"This is the center of the universe," said Rafael Ochoa, who lives outside Venice, Italy. "There's no other place to be."

In his New Year's greeting, US President George W. Bush noted the continuing violence in Iraq.

"Last year, America continued its mission to fight and win the war on terror and promote liberty as an alternative to tyranny and despair," Bush said as the state went waiting Americans a happy new year.

"In the New Year, we will remain on the offensive against the enemies of freedom, advance the security of our country and work toward a free and unified Iraq."

Across the globe, the countdown to the New Year was marked, in parts, with a combination of jog runs, prayers and hopes.

In Rio de Janeiro, nearly 2 million police officers formed an arc around the Brazilian city, keeping revelers and criminals apart.

In Sydney, fireworks exploded over Harbor Bridge as a million onlookers celebrated the New Year. The display was to celebrate the Sydney Harbor Bridge's 75th anniversary.

Sydney police said all subways points around the shoreline were at or near capacity as some 1,000 kilograms of fireworks exploded overhead.

Hundreds of thousands of others clustered in London on Big Ben rang in 2007. The chimes were relayed by sound systems along the River Thames and the embankment lined its banks into Le Champs-Elysées in search of a light show countdown projected onto the 328-meter London Eye Ferris wheel. The commentary was followed by a 10-minute fireworks display. "Big enough and loud enough to be seen — all over the capital," Mayor Ken Livingstone said.

In India, police arrested two suspected Islamic militants about one kilometer from the site of Mahatma Gandhi's main public New Year's Eve celebrations, a report cited police as saying.

Police Reinforce 3,000 people at a New Year's Eve session at the Mexico City in Rome that 2007 would bring the world "peace, stability, justice."

Celebrations canceled

In Thailand, city officials cancelled Bangkok's main New Year's Eve celebrations Sunday after a series of bombs killed three people and wounded more than 30. Thousands of revelers who had gathered at the Central World Plaza shopping mall complex for the event were sent home, officials said. But the celebration continued for hundreds of other people in Bangkok's Patpong Road red-light district. (See story on Page A20)

Police officials in Madrid also canceled a traditional New Year festival in the city center as a precaution following Saturday's Gipuzy bomb blast claimed by the armed Basque separatist group ETA.

The blast injured 10 people and two Ecuadorian citizens remain missing. If confirmed dead, they would be the first fatalities recorded in ETA since 2003.

But the capitals of Bulgaria and Romania saw their biggest parties since the fall of communism 17 years ago as two of Brussels's young dazzled and drank their way into 2007 and the European Union.

"Welcome to EU"

Spectacular sound and light shows lit up Sofia and Bucharest as the two countries celebrated becoming the 26th and 27th members of the bloc, the sky exploding with fireworks in red, blue and gold at the stroke of midnight.

"Welcome to the EU," Gil Emiliano Dominguez, Commissioner Olli Rehn and a crowd of tens of thousands stuck at a celebration in Bucharest, where he was joined on stage by Romania's president and European Soloist minister from Germany, Denmark, Austria and Hungary. Officials were flying over Monday in Sofia for celebrations there.

But severe weather forced the cancellation of festivities in New Zealand and southern parts of Britain.

In Belfast, Northern Ireland, an outdoor concert that was in France and singer Beverley Knight and rock band Ulta Thrills was called off due to the threat of gale-force winds.

Glasgow officials said high winds and rain had forced them to cancel traditional fireworks New Year's celebrations in the Scottish city.

In Paris, an estimated 400,000 crowded the Champs-Elysees to ring in the New Year.

Germans took advantage of mild weather, with organizers saying six million people attending festivities at the capital's Brandenburg Gate.

Year's first dawn

In Japan, thousands climbed mountains, some scaling famed Mount Fuji, to greet the first dawn of the year. Police reported crowds at the summit to reach 10,000.

Many Japanese — ranging from families with children to elderly couples — usually start climbing at night so they can watch the sun rise at the summit.

Police anticipated 90 million visitors to the country's major Buddhist temples and shrines across the first three days of the new year, as people offer prayers for peace, health and prosperity in one of the few religious rites in which most Japanese regularly take part.

In Hong Kong, 2007 brought immediate changes, as sunlight heralded sweeping new anti-smoking laws that technically made pulling party goers habit-to-go on the spot fine.

Muslim fest, too

The New Year coincides with the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha, creating the opportunity for a double celebration in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan.

But the party mood quickly dissipated for more than 1,000 Hajis who had to seek hospital treatment on Sunday after their ferries slipped badly as they held down struggling goats, sheep and bulls during attempts at ritual slaughter on the island of the Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice. AP, AFP

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At nawa'y maging halimbawa ang kaisahan at tibay na nakamtan -- dahil sa inyong pamumuno -- ng Kapatirang Iglesia sa buong daigdig, anuman ang kaibahan ng paniniwala, sa pagharap sa mga masasalimuot na hamong kinahaharap ng ating bansa at lipunan.

Sana'y patuloy na magningning ang inyong tala. Maligayang kaarawan Ka Erdie!

GOVERNOR AYONG S. MALIKSI,
kapamilya at mga mamamayan ng Cavite

Kin cheer up Abra gov in Camp Crame

By Alcuin Papa

RELATIVES AND SUPPORTERS of Abra Gov. Vicente Valera, who is detained at Camp Crame for illegal possession of firearms, tried to make New Year's Eve as happy and festive as possible for him.

Rose Valera, the governor's daughter, said the governor was in "high spirits" and tried to cheer up his family and visitors.

"My father still has his sense of humor. He was the one cracking jokes and lifting up the spirits of our relatives and supporters," Rose said in an interview.

She described the family's New Year's Eve celebration at the PNP Custodial Center room where Valera is being kept as festive, with more than included spinach, rice cakes, Chinese food, lechon and spirits, an Ilocano dish that Rose said was a favorite of her father's.

She said the family even managed to sing some songs on a videoke machine.

Rose said the family was both "sad" and "happy" over the situation of their patriarch.

"We are sad that all this is happening. But we are happy that media is finally interviewing him. It was difficult [celebrating New Year's Eve in jail], but we still hope for the best. We have a lot to be thankful for," said the youngest Valera.

Rose, who is a lawyer herself, said her father's lawyers were "doing everything legally possible to protect his rights."

She added that the governor had "every intention" to honor an invitation from police to shed light on the killing of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin, a political rival of the governor who was shot to death on the grounds of the Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City last Dec. 16.

Police said Valera was a suspect in the killing and has invited him for an interview.

Rose insisted that her father was not a suspect in the Bersamin slaying, saying the police had merely sent an invitation "which he can honor at his own convenience."

"And he has every intention to honor it as soon as he can. But now he is detained here," she said.

Valera and three of his aides were stopped at Commonwealth Ave. by members of the police Traffic Management Group (TMG) very early last Friday for using a vehicle without any license plates.

Valera and his companions were brought to Camp Crame after the vehicle was inspected and found to contain seven guns and a grenade. The four were later charged with illegal possession of firearms and detained.

TMG commander Chief Supt. Errol Pan yesterday denied that his men had "planted" the evidences in Valera's car, as claimed by the governor's camp.

"What is new [in] it's next to impossible to plant evidence because there is no time and media and his lawyers were right there. They are just saying that to discredit his arrest and the process of the investigation," Pan told reporters.

He also denied that his men had taken the governor's Rolex watch, jewelry and P500,000 in cash. The governor claimed that the items were missing after police took him and his men into custody.

Pan meanwhile disputed Valera's claim that the Chevrolet Suburban that he was using was new and that its license plates were still being processed by the dealers.

Pan said the TMG had received information that the vehicle was already in the country two years ago.

Pan also said the Valera camp has "refused to cooperate" in the investigation. Sampling failed so far to submit the documents of the vehicle and of the guns found in side it.

CONTROVERSIAL. Abra Gov. Vicente Valera spends Christmas and New Year's Eve in Camp Crame where he is detained for illegal possession of firearms. INQUIRER

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DNA tests to establish Janjalani identity to be done in US this week

By Alcuin Papa

DNA TESTS ON samples taken from a cadaver believed to be Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leader Khadaffy Janjalani and that of his brother Hector will be done in the United States this week, a police source said yesterday.

The samples, which may be available in 30 to 45 days later, will determine whether the former ASG rebels will receive a ₱5-million dollar reward. The two led Philippine Marines to a site in Barangay Kabasalan in Parang, Sulu where they were reportedly killed last Dec. 23.

The US government had offered the reward for information leading to the capture—dead or alive—of Janjalani, who is on their list of "Most Wanted Terrorists."

The two informants claimed Janjalani was finally wounded in an encounter with government soldiers last September.

The official speaking on condition of anonymity said PNP officials have agreed to a request from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to fly to the US and begin the tests.

"The testing will be done there because it is the FBI that has the official mandate."

The source also said the Americans wanted to make sure the DNA tests were "done right," despite the fact that DNA testing can be done here in the country, to facilitate the turnover of the reward money.

Police officials confirmed last Friday that investigators from the Intelligence Service and PNP managed to extract a viable sample from Janjalani's brother Hector. DNA tests can confirm they are brothers.

Janjalani was born March 3, 1975 in Isabela City, Basilan province. He took over the reins of the ASG after his older brother Abdurajak was killed in a firefight with police in Basilan in 1998.

The Abu Sayyaf Group is notorious for the kidnapping of tourists in Sipadan and the Ipil Pulmay beach resort in Malaysia, and for behind several recent terrorist bombings in Germany. The Basilan- and Sulu-based rebel group is also believed to have established links with the shadowy Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah and Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda terror ring.

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PIGGY BANKS. A vendor hopes to cash in on piggy banks sales on Manila's Chinatown Sunday, for the Chinese zodiac/calendar the year 2007 is the Year of the Wild Boar or Pig.

DOT bats for more North

By Jerome Aning

THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM is working to get more visitors from North America, particularly Filipino expatriates, United States and Canadian citizens of Filipino descent, and their friends, to visit the Philippines this year.

DOT's Team North America will be launching the second phase of its traffic generation to have tourists from the US and Canada via the agency's new web portal, www.experiencephilippines.ph.

A similar has been released for the cities—"The Philippines: Explore, Experience, Evolve."

"The program aims to persuade Americans, Canadians and global Pinoys, particularly those who were born and raised in the US and Canada, to visit our country and experience for themselves our modern Philippines and its diverse attractions," Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said.

"Through their personal experiences in the country they can be our advocates and spokespersons when they go back home," Durano said.

The program's first phase, dubbed the "Great New Flight Destination," ran from June 11 to Sept. 11, 2006. The first two batches of 6,100 winners arrived in Detroit in 2006—the rest will be arriving until February this year.

The arrivals were given a warm welcome at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and breakfast at a 5-star hotel.

The second phase of the drive is called the "Quest for Best" promo.

For the phase, fresh permanent residents of North America who travel to the Philippines on vacation or business between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2007, will have the chance to win prizes ranging from a fully furnished condominium in Metro Manila to free-fare airline seats.

"Those picked each week should receive a call from someone in the Philippines," Durano said.

US and Canadian passport holders, of legal age, [illegible] only [illegible] They will [illegible] the [illegible] drawn.

The lot [illegible] the "One [illegible] Kick Coughlin [illegible] proprietor [illegible] National [illegible] American [illegible] votes, Mo[illegible] years.

Durano [illegible] from Calif[illegible] since the [illegible] of its 10[illegible] Senator[illegible] Metro Mar[illegible]

Invariably [illegible] to [illegible] about 5.5 [illegible] American[illegible]

FIREWORKS. Guests visiting on the Enchanted Kingdom in Santa Rosa, Laguna, to usher in 2007.

Erap gets 9-hour pass to visit mom in Polk St. home

By Norman Bordadora

OUSTED PRESIDENT JOSEPH ESTRADA spent New Year's Day yesterday with his 101-year-old mother, other members of his family and some leaders of the United Opposition.

Estrada was given a nine-hour pass by the Sandiganbayan antigraft court to spend time with his ailing mother, Mary Estrada, at her home on Kennedy Street in North Greenhills, San Juan.

But shortly before the midnight deadline, Estrada's lawyers prompted the transfer of the session, with the acquiescence of the police guards, to Estrada's own residence at No. 1 Polk Street, also in Greenhills.

"It was past noon when New Year's Day family reunion. We were happy because we became a whole family again. We were also sad because we knew that at the end of the day, he would have to leave," said one of Estrada's sons, San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito.

And as in past Sunday get-together at his or his brother's house, the Estrada family get-together was interrupted by "political consultation" between friends, who is still recognized as a leader of the opposition, and several of his political allies.

"There were also consultations because of the 2007 senatorial elections fast approaching," said Ejercito, who had received his father's blessings to run for the Senate in place of his brother, Luis Ejercito, the deposed president's wife, who will reportedly not be seeking reelection.

"It was agreed that the final lineup of the United Opposition for the senatorial elections will be announced on Jan. 15," the San Juan mayor said.

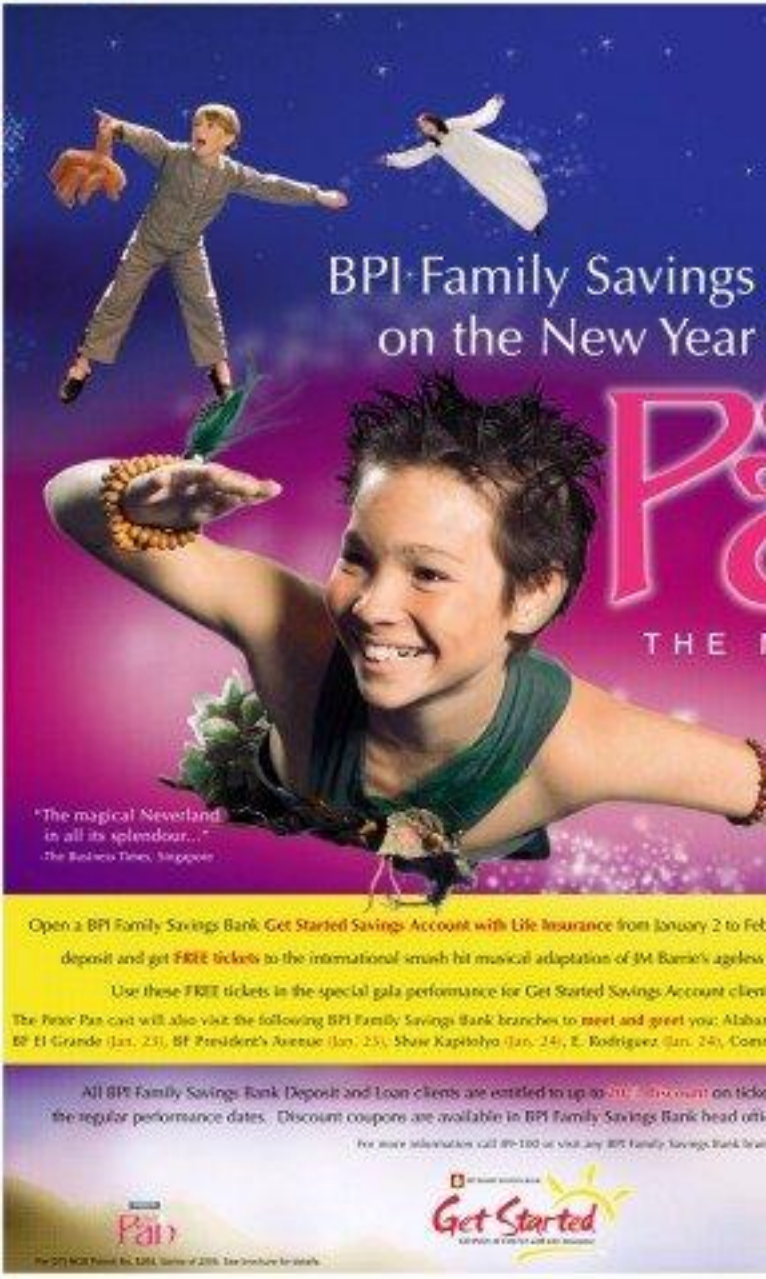
Ejercito said there were many politicians who wanted to join the opposition's senatorial lineup, "unlike the administration that seems to have no material for their senatorial team."

No similar people who wanted to run for either yesterday, were the usual ones who would visit during his subsequent court detentions.

They included Makati Mayor and former United opposition president Jejomar Binay, former Ambassador to the United States Rosario Manalo, Former senators Francisco Tatad and Teo Sotto, and House Minority leader Francis Escudero.

"There were no controversial figures. It was just a gathering of family and close friends," Ejercito said.

Estrada left his Greenhills home at 5 p.m. and was scheduled [illegible] his detention center at Tanay, Rizal, where he [illegible] the judge's [illegible] on his recently concluded plunder and perjury trial.



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those who earlier were natu-
ania and had been in the US
1980s. Upon arriving, many op-
their hometowns in Cebu,
Negros Iloilo, Pangasinan and
ndao.

ng to DOT's Team Hawk Assess-
Pete Jr.), Anita Ago, there are
million Filipinos and Filipino-
in the US alone.

"We have barely scratched the surface of potential travelers from this continent," Anita Ago said.

"There is a big slice of the North American social market that remains untapped. There's a lot of potential for this market to grow and to capture this market we are creating enticements over there," the tourism official said.

DOT statistics as of October showed that visitors from the US numbered 467,066 and while 60,271 Canadians came to the Philippines. The two market grew by 8 and 18 percent, respectively, since 2005.

The top priority, Ago said, is to boost room occupancy in Dvigan, Mandalayong City, Manila and Cebu.

It also has arrangements with business-class airline tickets and domestic tour packages from PAL, a Shangri-La Mall shopping spree, Phil Money Card and Boardmaster packages, including furniture and appliance showcases, American Eye Care treatments and a Duty Free Philippines shopping extravaganza.

FIERY 2007... Children play with fireworks as they write the new year 2007 using a slow time exposure during New Year's Eve revelry in Manila. Filipinos celebrate the new year with noisy merry-making and fireworks.

100 runaway maids in Beirut need help

By Miles Ozon

WHILE THE CLOCK TICKED TOWARD THE New Year, more than 100 Filipino domestic helpers sought refuge at the Philippine Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, awaiting their transfer to the Lebanese Immigration Section, the center where their cases will be heard.

Beginning this month, the Philippine Embassy will be turning over to the Lebanese government custody of Filipino workers who had run away from their employers for reasons that included maltreatment, molestation, temporary leave of vehicles and abominable working conditions, the Inquirer learned over the weekend from a well-placed source in Lebanon who asked not to be identified for security reasons.

The Department of Foreign Affairs confirmed the report, saying that it is another step in the "coordinated" of the Filipino workers' cases with the Lebanese immigration bureau.

"They cannot leave until the (Lebanese) government evaluates their cases, settles with their employers, processes their clearances and (only then) would they finally be given an exit pass," acting foreign spokesperson Lil Mañaya told the Inquirer in a phone interview Sunday.

Without the "coordination," the domestic helpers might not be permitted to leave by the Lebanese government, Mañaya added.

The clearance is the final step of a Filipino worker in a detention center while her case is being heard in one month. Quoting embassy figures, Mañaya said there were 101 Filipino workers currently staying at the embassy. The Inquirer source said there were 117.

This sees a substantial increase in the number of Filipino domestic workers awaiting resolution proceedings following last year's war between Israel and Hezbollah, which saw thousands of Filipino domestic workers fleeing the trouble in droves.

"There's an ongoing fear and reluctance, which I think is valid, for them to go to the Immigration Detention Center," the Inquirer source said.

Already traumatized by their experiences with their employers, the domestic helpers feared they would be subjected to harassment and intimidation at the detention center.

The Filipino workers said they would rather remain at the embassy while their cases were being heard rather than a detention center.

Each worker also had a common plea: Please get us home.

The source said that a Lebanese government regulation required that Filipino runaways be turned over to Lebanese authorities within 24 hours of arriving at the embassy.

At the detention center, the Filipino workers would be guarded by Lebanese police and could be questioned by Lebanese lawyers "without the presence of an embassy official or lawyer," the source said.

The source added that those domestic helpers whose cases were being handled by Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center, a nongovernment organization that helped migrant workers, were luckier because the group ensured that a lawyer was present during an investigation.

"But Caritas only handles hard cases like rape, cruelty inflicted with instruments and maltreatment that were brought to their attention immediately, that is, within hours of the crime," the source said.

While the Philippines is bound to follow the Lebanese regulation, Mañaya said the government assured the Filipino workers that "every case processed with the Lebanese immigration authorities would be given full attention attention."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2013

OPINION

The year ahead

THE FIRST MONTH OF THE WESTERN CALENDAR was named after Janus of Roman mythology the god of beginnings. Janus is often depicted with two faces, so that one face looks forward while the other looks backward. And so it is that in January, we look back at the past year and review our accomplishments and failures. And we also look forward and try to predict what the year ahead has in store for us.

EDITORIAL The past year was a terrible year with its more than usual share of natural and manmade disasters. Four strong typhoons struck the country, killing hundreds of people and destroying hundreds of millions of pesos worth of public and private property. In some cases the disasters were caused by human negligence and lack of preparedness, such as the fire in an Ormoc mall that killed 25 people.

Malacañang boasts that last year was a good year for the economy, with the peso rising to its highest in nearly six years, the stock market shooting up to a near 10-year high, inflation down to one digit, and dollar reserves zooming to $72.6 billion. But all these economic gains are apparently being enjoyed only by the upper classes, and not by the masses who continue to suffer from low income, hunger and inadequate social services.

On the political front, 2012 was a turbulent year that saw at least one supposed coup attempt and a continuing conflict between administration and opposition forces over a proposal to amend the Constitution by various means. The Supreme Court struck down what it called a deceptive people's initiative and attempts to restrict the people's rights and freedoms through the calibrated preemptive response, an executive order in a supposed state of emergency, and another order that banned executive officials from testifying at congressional hearings.

As the year ended, the Subic rape case continued to make the headlines, with the executive department riding roughshod over the judiciary and hustling convicted rapist Daniel Smith, an American Marine, out of a Philippine jail and back to the US Embassy.

More than 700 leftist militants and 40 journalists were killed. The almost worldly killings alarmed the international community, including the American Chamber of Commerce, but drew only a weak reaction from the Filipinos themselves.

The closing weeks of the year gave us a foretaste of the violence and bloodshed that has abroad in this election year. A congressman of Aklan was killed just outside a church, and the governor of the province was immediately named, but not formally charged, as the principal suspect.

The economy appears to be headed for better times, and was expected to ride on the crest of increasing remittances from overseas Filipino workers. But the OFW boom is being sustained at a terrible social cost. Broken homes, neglected children, etc.) and a worsening brain drain that could result in a crisis in medical services and education.

The administration forces momentarily rallied a halt to the efforts to amend or revise the Constitution to put in place a unicameral, parliamentary form of government that would ensure President Macapagal-Arroyo's continuance in power, probably even beyond 2010. But embattled by the low turnout at a prayer rally organized principally by the Catholic bishops, the administration is again gearing up for another attempt to force through a Charter change. The opposition forces will not take this sitting down, so expect more verbal and physical clashes to occur in public forums, protests and demonstrations this year.

The Arroyo administration is determined to maintain its two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives to foil any attempt to impeach the President. Expectedly, it will use all its power, and the guns, goons and gold at its disposal in its massive campaign to win the election. It helps that the ruling election will be one of the bloodiest and darkest in the country's history—unless the election ban is strictly enforced, private armies are disbanded and trouble spots are brought under the control of a neutral agency. But the scandal-ridden Commission on Elections cannot be expected to stay neutral in this year's election.

Some parts of the country seem destined to suffer the fate of Sisyphus: they will continue to build, but whatever they have built will be struck down in a matter of days, if not hours, by stronger natural and man-provided floods.

It looks like the economy will continue to forge ahead this year but as in the past, the benefits will not seep down to the masses. This year does not look promising politically and socially. But then again, Filipinos may yet surprise themselves.

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Sprigs of hope

"Make sure the poor have reasons for hope."
—1999 Nobel Economics Laureate Amartya Sen

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

NEW DAY OF THE FILIPINOS ENTERED THE New Year with hope rather than fear. Social Weather Stations' early December 2012 nationwide survey "Are we the hopeful of the hopeless?" a friend in lawmakers a studied? Or is there hard-nosed basis for this easy forecast?

Our "either" "or" is the ordinary—and hope. In 2010—people in "genius," "It's their only stand the less than bright. So, before 2007 started, ordinary citizens marked the strategy by the House of Representatives—backed by President Macapagal-Arroyo—to amend the 1987 Constitution and tighten their grip on power. Earlier, people beat down military lawmakers' "pork barrel" "cocoy" to dumpsters and then they quickly ignored the call from vice-president Joseph Estrada, a fragmented opposition and radical Left, to hold one the streets.

There were crossroads choices. "Positive" citizens made them without the usual moaning on fatalistic swift beatitudes. Plus the "People Power" in a previous Supreme Servant" And in 2010, will this power serve to do a national Constitution on Elections that a spineless Outlook man has refused to straighten out?

This setting the future has never been one of man's greatest strengths. Take the year famous in the superscriptions: "Crystal-balling" is about making educated guesses of what has beyond the horizon. Prognosticator's realities, one sifts the words likely to endure—and reshape voters' eyes. "In today, tomorrow already-walks."

Looking ahead is a demanding task. Many of us and leaders, being a result of the flaws in the next elections. And few have the vision that goes beyond one, let alone two or three generations. For example, flushing aquifers, contaminated by salt due to over-pumping, as in Cebu, calculate two centuries or more.

The Inquirer's Sandy Araneta's barber can, do so for their grandchildren. What the future holds sadly ancient, must will be in their graves. Nonetheless, the drill to glimpse ahead usually works from pitch as a new year approaches. "If you could look into the seeds of time / And say which will grow and which will not," Banquo tells Macbeth.

That hopelessly little blurred constantly surround up the positive gains passed by the economy in 2006—which gives hope, in 2007, will these gains translate beyond enjoying IMF into more fully alleviating the misery of the poor? Out of every 100 Filipinos, 28 remain poor, classified as daily income of P98. "Those in the poor man's income," as de Chandelier's work says.

But the blight resulting from skewed wealth of the monopoly-capitalism is patent. The number of Filipino millionaires who live as dollarbills rose in 2006 by over 100,000 populations, the UN Human Development Report notes. Company that to Malaysia's 41, and classic hunger means 32 percent of our children, compared to 2 percent for Singaporeans. Gemma, minister is a heavy-development. Why does our 1,000 Singapore built a self plastic, that figure certainly looks impressive—until you realize that 10% than 26.

Out of every 100 grade-school kids have, 73 finish Grade V but 59 in Indonesia do. The implications of a half-educated people are chilling. "All Americans have in law of the equation," Harvard University's John Kenneth Galbraith said. "There must be a knowledgeable electorate ... or a surrender to the voices of ignorance ..."

We have to make up for lost time. Korea started from a hell ahead of us in the 1960s. Today the Korean GDP is five times bigger—less than of the Filipinos'. Over the last 20 years, Filipino investors grew by only 1.6 percent. That's "underperformance by any measure."

Aurora's lawyers say he has every right in life libel charges against people who criticize him because he is not a public official, he is a private citizen. What can I say? I can't, my case about their ability to tell truth from lie. So, I just say case about their ability to tell the truth.

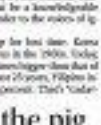
The entire substance of that is what he said he said did at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandals in 2005. If Aurora was just a private citizen whose existence had nothing to do with government, why did he go on "voluntarily to life" after being accused of influence-peddling and receiving kickbacks from an illegal numbers racket, presumably at that his wife would "go on without him"? If he was just a private citizen whose prodigious weight weighed little on government, why did Club Congress hire his partners to a major space before businessmen, debating the man making a terrible "murder" by letting him go? That area an hour before the set boxes was to appear at Club Filipino and GMA: had acting as overseas doors, she answered that "I hailed you on the cell and saw no candidate there" (Inside at last. Of course, sending the First Gentleman...thus phrase really burns the tongue—is San Francisco was as much a punishment, let him as leaving Dracula to drink blood, but that is another story.

The WLW and the libro of the class will themselves have a point when they say he enjoys libel suits against journalists across power dividends. By themselves, those suits already constitute a threat to it. But taken in conjunction with the smoldering destruction of journalists in the provinces, they are an effort to cow the media into silence. There are no libel suits against the publishers of the tabloids or the radio stars. The killing of critics outside of Metro Manila and the muzzling of critics inside it. It seems to do to the media what EO 464 did to public officials, which is to make them see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil.

This year may be the year of the pig, but we would do very well to see that the swine do not prosper.

Year of the pig

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

OVER THE WEEKEND I GOT FLOODED WITH text and calls from my lawyer friends offering me their services pro bono and prodigally should I need them in my "case." The reason for this was an item that appeared on page 3 of the business section in which I was called "Media groups tie Mike Arroyo over libel suits."

The third paragraph read: "The data suit argues that the libel suits have not only caused the respondents sleepless nights, they also have a chilling effect on press freedom," and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, one of the groups that instigated the study. Others involved are the Center for Freedom and Responsibility and the Rally Palmer, as well as 35 print journalists, including Philippine Daily Inquirer columnists Ramon Tulfo and Conrado de Quiros."

That is quite misleading, and has misled my friends into thinking I am one of the journalists the First Gentleman...a humongous insult to "first," "gentle" and "man"—has filed libel suits against. I am not, to my great dismay. I did say in a column some time ago that I will dismiss naked ambition, letting it rule of the day to the group of people who have earned the fellow's ire. There are now a whopping 42 of them, including my good friends Billy Esposo, Marites Vitug and Ellen Tordesillas.

Why they have not included me in the list, well, I can only guess that the First Gentleman's lawyer told a solicitous ex-Ch—friends told me about it—that he only once the things I have done wrong are well within the law. I had a good laugh over that at the expense of my friends...who seemed to take a rather violent exception to the description.

I can only thank my lawyer friends for their generous (and non-lawyer friends for their expressions of sympathy and solidarity) and beg them to stick around. I may yet have need to impose on them in the future.

For those who do not know it yet, and by way of background, only the past months Mike Arroyo has been filing libel charges against journalists for calling him various things, from be-

ing arrogant to being a crook. That has no precedent in history. I do not recall any president's son—or member of the family—going after those many journalists, if at all. Well, now Arroyo's sitting on fighting back. Gazetting, with the aid of lawyer Hilly Roque, they filed a countersuit against Arroyo citing abuse of power.

I am, of course, all for it and have been helping out in it. I am one of the endorsers of the libel suit, which was probably what created the confusion. From where I stand though, I don't know why Arroyo shouldn't just be charged with abuse of the English language, if not of reality. What does libel mean but that one is being? What does to charge people with libel mean but to say that they are liars? Hilly Roque calling other people liars? That isn't just the pot calling the kettle black, that is the cat and rat calling the eagle vermin? Never mind if the journalists were right or wrong in call Arroyo a crook, mind only if he or his wife and their friends have any capacity to tell truth from lie.

You want to charge someone with lying, charge the person who started unilaterally the world but I'm again but did. You want to charge someone with lying, charge the person who said that no one was interested in impeachment trial in power but interested but paid off the "low pressures" to kill the impeachment bids. Indeed, you want to charge someone with lying, charge that father of all liars who said he was here all the time in response that people, including the Philippine Military Academy and the Philippine Immigration, who swore he had fled abroad; and that the entire opposition that was hustling bills down to interest for his crime against democracy and the Filipino people.

Charge him with libel, and I'll be the first to endorse you when compared to Thailand's right times," says UP's Dennis Maga. And that social ed-saving homespun comes from Vietnam, which could overtake us next.

But, we will stumble into 2007, as we did in 2006, without an approved national budget, Senate President Manuel Villar, Jr. vows to veto the Senate and the House of Representatives have been unable to agree on the appropriations bill. So, future government operations will be stopped onto a budget for a vanished past, "You can save into the future by the present" the statesman Edmund Burke once said. But then Burke never saw our Congress.

"In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of," Confucius echoes to the students. "But in a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of." And that's why the Philippines is lagging in meeting the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty, infant mortality and other threats.

Look at the past. Those who gave us hope were not those who occupied official positions. They were more usually ordinary men and women, self-effacing individuals or group of compassionate, who paired themselves out for others. Some have been recognized. But marshalling private resources and government cooperation to build homes for the poor. Tony Meloto of Gawad Kalinga comes to mind. Caritas Manila is another.

All of us can draw personal lists of many others who work with little notice. Some raise, I know, scrounge for medicine, soup and food for hundreds of prisoners, write to their families, and seek scholarships for their children. A Cotabato physician struggles in a Muslim community to establish its healthcare. A woman lawyer spends time giving free legal counsel to the poor. Some friends help patients and families in the leprosarium.

The list of such people is long. They give flesh to people like us reason for hope. "And if you don't think the thought of hope is your heart," the old Chinese proverb says, "the singing bird will come."

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Special 70th birthday treat for JDV

LATE LAST TUESDAY, THE SECRETARIES OF the Justice and Local Government combed every inch of Malacañang looking for Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita. Finally, they found him in the Media Conference Room, where he was watching the live coverage of the Supreme Court's deliberations on the petition filed by Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. and Speaker Jose de Venecia III questioning the constitutionality of the Arroyo administration's cash-for-votes program.

Ermita was surrounded by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, who explained that the confusion in the public mind arises from the fact that there is no law that prohibits the giving of "appiyos."

Gonzalez said the DOJ is working on a bill that would make it illegal for anyone to give appiyos, but that it will not be retroactive. The DOJ is also working on a bill that would make it illegal for anyone to receive appiyos.

Ermita, who was in the middle of a phone conversation with Speaker de Venecia, put down the phone and asked Gonzalez to explain what appiyos are.

Gonzalez explained that appiyos are "gifts" that are given to persons in authority to influence the exercise of their discretion. He said that appiyos are different from bribes because bribes are given to persons in authority to influence the exercise of their discretion in favor of the person giving the bribe, while appiyos are given to persons in authority to influence the exercise of their discretion in favor of the person receiving the appiyos.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision to declare the cash-for-votes program unconstitutional would mean that the Arroyo administration would have to return the money to the people who received it.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to return the money to the people who received it, because the money was given to them in good faith.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop the program.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to stop the program, but that the government would have to change the way it implements the program.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop giving out money to the poor.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to stop giving out money to the poor, but that the government would have to change the way it gives out money to the poor.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop giving out money to the rich.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to stop giving out money to the rich, but that the government would have to change the way it gives out money to the rich.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop giving out money to the middle class.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to stop giving out money to the middle class, but that the government would have to change the way it gives out money to the middle class.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop giving out money to the poor, the rich and the middle class.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to stop giving out money to the poor, the rich and the middle class, but that the government would have to change the way it gives out money to the poor, the rich and the middle class.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop giving out money to the poor, the rich, the middle class and the government.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to stop giving out money to the poor, the rich, the middle class and the government, but that the government would have to change the way it gives out money to the poor, the rich, the middle class and the government.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop giving out money to the poor, the rich, the middle class, the government and the Supreme Court.

Gonzalez said that the Supreme Court's decision would not require the government to stop giving out money to the poor, the rich, the middle class, the government and the Supreme Court, but that the government would have to change the way it gives out money to the poor, the rich, the middle class, the government and the Supreme Court.

Ermita asked Gonzalez if the Supreme Court's decision would mean that the government would have to stop giving out money to the poor, the rich, the middle class, the government, the Supreme Court and the Commission on Elections.

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Despite rosy growth statistics, more Filipinos go to bed hungry

5.3.3 PERCENT ECONOMIC GROWTH in 2006 has seen the Arroyo government definitely boastful. In a press statement issued by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, the Arroyo government bragged it has pulled out some 3.3 million Filipinos from the trenches of destitution in the last five years. "The government aims to cut seven hungry by at least 400,000 families within a year and this effort is already rolling forward," he said.

But the exercise of self-serving statistics released by Malacañang can change the public's perception of the true state of Philippine economy from ailing more and more Filipinos are going to bed at night with empty stomachs.

According to the SWS, a recent survey showed that about 3.3 million households experienced hunger at least once in the past three months—a nine-month high. The survey also clearly showed that, from September to November of that year, hunger incidence shot up in practically every part of the country—Metro Manila, Luzon, Mindanao and the Visayas.

The inability of the majority of people to feed themselves is caused by many factors. According to Jose Glipo, convenor of Task Force Food Sovereignty (TFFS), "The problem of hunger is rooted in some causes that certainly interwoven like lack of access to land, water and other productive resources." The dwindling support of the government to agricultural, rural development is also seen as a main cause of widespread hunger.

Despite its rhetoric to its commitment to pull out Filipinos from the clutches of destitution, the government has miserably failed to deliver its promises to the people.

The situation of hunger is really appalling, in the Philippines where food importation has been allowed for years now; and as cheap food flood the local markets, local farmers have gone bankrupt and domestic production has been displaced. Unable to compete with foreign producers, local farmers have abandoned their farms and migrated to the cities, thereby further swelling the ranks of the unemployed. Clearly, as a result of farm-displacement, unemployment equals engulfed hunger for the very people who till the land and produce food.

Under the doctrine of parens patriae, the government should defend the right of the people to have adequate access to food as a basic fundamental human right. Hunger is something that cannot be ignored. A quick response by the government is called for. Food must be brought to the table without delay. If the government can't do this, it has no right to govern.

—AVA F. DALUSUNG,
Integrated Rural Development Foundation-Task Force Food Sovereignty,
47 Malakas St., Diliman, Quezon City

PRELUDE TO 2007 ELECTIONS: Young Filipinos beating the deadline for voters' registration—a scene repeated in Comelec offices throughout the country.

LETTERS

Why a parliamentary system is not for us

THE INSISTENCE OF TEODORO MAZA, pagal-Arroyo allies in the House of Representatives on Charter change is very sickening. Their acts clearly show us is that the parliamentary form of government is not for us. After getting millions of pesos from the pork barrel, they now would want to perpetuate themselves in power.

I suggest that the electricity meter and telephone connections of the House be cut off so that the members of the majority will no longer be able to engage in their chestnutgate. After all, it is Juan dela Cruz who is footing the bill.

—ALBERTO M. PEDROSO,
apizon@yahoo.com

Rizal on 'borrowed' language

I HAVE TO AGGRIEVE WITH FORMER Justice Irinco Cruz, specifically that part of his Dec. 26 column ("Honorable Setting Rizal") where he said that "Filipino is a beautiful language that is easily learned without formal instruction, but it is not useful for international communication."

First of all, barring Filipino expatriates for real motivation, even if one is a native speaker.

In Spain and Latin America, students need formal instruction in Spanish even if they speak it at home. In Japan, Japanese students need formal instruction in Japanese. And similarly students in the United States, Australia, Canada and Britain will need formal instruction in English in order to be literate in the language.

Justice Cruz's opinion of the Filipino language is condescending. It will not advance the development of Filipino as a national language. He owes it to Filipinos to study Rizal's ideas first and not confuse the interpretations of Filipino. If people of other nationalities want to learn our Filipino, we should have a way of teaching it through formal instruction in the language.

It is lamentable that Justice Cruz cited Jose Rizal, who tried to write his third novel in Tagalog after realizing that more Filipinos would be able to read his works. What possessed Rizal from finishing the novel in that Tagalog was not yet fully developed to express what he intended to say. In Rizal's earlier words, we find a similar theme.

However, I agree with Justice Cruz that our Filipinos need to improve our English competency for that should not be at the expense of the Filipino language.

In fact, the problem of English competency should be scrutinized separately from learning Filipino. Rizal himself was hard to "El Filibusterismo" about adopting a foreign language that could lead us to lose our national identity and siphon the colonial chains that bound us.

—BENJAMIN DALLEO JR., M.D.,
ben.salleo@gmail.com, Department of Biological Sciences 2012 Life Sciences Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Time for Church to join 'opposition'

I WOULD LIKE TO REACT TO THE commentary of Doris Magsaysay "If the Church moves." (PDI, 11/29/06) I agree with him that it is high time for the Church to take action and join the opposition movement. I don't mean the political opposition to Congress and the Senate. I refer to the the bishops of lay leaders who, like Sandy Bellaco, have the sincere intention of removing the present regime of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Their need the moral authority and leadership of the Church to realize the miracle work.

Many bishops and priests still believe that only the lay faithful can go to the polarized center and have as "the theater of their operations, the world in which they properly belong" (PCP II—so if bishops and priests belong to another world) of God?).

Here some of our public fans seem to think that way. In line with that warning motto, Sen. Panfilo Lacson recently received a sign from God when "a prominent man of the club" advised him—no, even decided for him—that he must run for mayor of Manila.

There are some members of the club, would do better to shed their dark if they think that this forbids them to actively and responsible participate in the political arena. They don't have to run for office, but they should actively involve themselves with those branches of lay leaders who are waiting at the roadside to raise action against the present regime. It is high time, indeed.

—MANOLO DE VEGA,
devega@yahoo.com

Another flip-flop, or did she just mean to lie?

NEVER MIND THAT "SINA DALES CHA-CHA-cancer" (PDI, 12/28/06) What else may cancers been an acceptable lie?

And never mind that only 31,000 to 20,000 of the hollywood half a million people dressed up at the Quirino Grandstand for the "thanksgiving" prayer rally last Dec. 17. That, too, was the result of an appalling "turnout-ish." I mean, of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, boasting snowballing public outrage over the brazen attempt by the House majority to convene Congress as a constituent assembly, it lost its voice to calls for a multi-sectoral, multi-faith and, inevitably, political rally against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her allies, then dumped cold water on the people's anger by celebrating a non-partisan, virtually exclusive Roman Catholic Mass in thanksgiving for what CBCP and her allies' succeeding pronouncements have proven to be another fraudulent one.

The disappointment of many resulting from the latest of GMA's betrayals is no longer that new much. What matters most is that next year's elections are now certain, at least according to the President's political adviser Colonel Claudio. Truth to say, only a no-election scenario in 2007 can preserve the present semblance of the House, which had twice prevented GMA's impeachment. To perpetuate GMA in power—and, of course, themselves as well—through legal or illegal means, by hook or by crook, was precisely the motive behind the House majority member's Charter change adventurism.

The thing is, nobody can really guess what makes it GMA's mind, how desperate she must have become to ignore dear-me realities, or how she must have been emboldened by the OICP's tender-than-expected rally. Or maybe, she simply wants to be again.

In any case, the nation's last remaining chance to unseat GMA—which the nation itself repeatedly has made it in the last three years—is just around the bend: come May 2007, we can sweep her congressional allies from Congress. That need not be too difficult to achieve, given that many of them are on their third terms and, of course, given their disgraceful record in the present Congress.

—RUBY L. CHIONGBIAN,
33 Veron St., Golden Country Homes Angeles, Batangas City

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Tuesday, January 2, 2007

THE BIGGEST DANCE EVENT THIS SEASON!

SHALL WE DANCE

Christmas with the Stars

Christmas Ibe!

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Across the NATION

RARE APPEARANCE FOR WIFE'S GOV BID

Bong Pineda surfaces for May polls

AN INDICATION of how serious the fight for the governorship of Pampanga would be was the rare appearance of Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda in Pavia town to thank about 7,000 leaders and supporters at Session Lito Lapid for hosting the Lapid camp in support the campaign of his wife, Lilia. Pineda, suspected of being the country's biggest jueteng lord, warned the Lapids against raising the jueteng issue against his wife. | Grace Nono | gnono@inquirer.com.ph

By Roneth Ovejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

LUBAO, Pampanga—Suspected jueteng lord Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda on Sunday drew more than 7,000 leaders from the Lapids' hometown of Pavia and rallied their support for his wife's gubernatorial bid in the May 2007 elections.

Pineda's rare public appearance in support the gubernatorial bid of his wife, Board Member Lilia Pineda, was seen as an early battle signal against Gov. Manuel "Lito" Lapid and his son, reelectionist Gov. Mark Lapid.

The usually shadowy Pineda went up the stage of the Labor Gym at 5:25 p.m. Sunday to thank the 7,000 contingent led by Mayor Exequiel Gundran, Vice Mayor Consuelo de la Cruz and eight councilors.

Pineda's formal debut as early betrothed support for the Lapids and agreed to back up politicians who want a change of leadership at the provincial government.

He refused the "harassment" over the alleged failure of Governor Lapid to deliver on his promise to raise quorum sessions, the "arrogance" of the Lapids to rule lessons, insecurity in the elite he boasted members of the Lakas-CMD, and, quoting his wife's statement, the suffering of Kapampangans under the jueteng capid's "poor leadership."

"Ni isa mapi-pilitan kung pulpolan kung iiboto a ar Go, dia ligit, I am not interested in joining any politician," Pineda told the crowd framed the Tagalog lord, translated as "Nobody is forced to support the Lapids."

"It's up to you to select the kind of Pampanga. But please choose the good ones. Surely, I would vote for a good person," he said.

In an exclusive interview, the first time he granted the Inquirer, Pineda said Sunday in Lapid could not convince him in his talk to change plans.

"With the dying congressman, Pampanga is also no President. (There's nothing more that he could do. So better go to President Macapagal-Arroyo)," he said.

Pineda said he was asked to devote some ignored his when they met in a golf course in the United States recently. He said Lapid enabled him now while the senator's office allowed to spread for re-election.

Asked how much money he would possibly spend on the campaign of his wife and her allies, Pineda said: "Ehh, bahay nino lang. Hindi nakagiling gastusin. Often, di pa nawa'l ser pinapiro nanes. 'Yun don't need to spend much."

"If you ask me? I don't want Baby (Lilia) to run. She could still help poor people even when she doesn't have any public office," he said.

In the interview, he aired a warning to the Lapids should they take the jueteng issue against his wife.

"Irespetuhin ko. Irespetuhin ko ang labas. If will answer there is war, I will tell-tell," he said. He, however, declined to elaborate.

At the program, Gundran raised Board Member Pineda's hands after he called all town officials to the stage. He described their appearance as "wholesale solidarity."

"I just followed the wishes of my people to rebel against leaders who still really were there," Gundran said.

Pro-barangay captain Eduardo de la Cruz said he and 20 other village chiefs would put up a "united force" for Board Member Pineda.

When she spoke, Board Member Pineda raised the controversy in quarry rates that are largely decried by contractors.

"There are no problems as we speak," she said while calling quiet.

She should be the luckiest town in Pampanga in the event the leaders are dumped," she said, referring to the prospect of factional violence.

Quoting Ms. Arroyo's bull story, former Pampanga Vice Gov. Chito Mamaquiel-Salgado, Board Member Pineda told the audience: "If a cat enough that we choose people wiser and good-looking ones in public office. What we need are public servants."

On the other hand, the project ed turned in a "sudden rise with radio satellites to improve the situation at her children's.

She has not yet announced an, she what party she would run or if she would join the Rebellion ng Mamamayang Pilipino (Kampi) faction of the Pampanga Kilusan League that broke ties with the Lapids in November.

No announcement has been made on who her running mate would be or who would complete the local Bangsamoro slate.

The Lapids on Sunday performed no comment on the moves of the Pinedas to answer the allegations leveled at them.

Supreme sources said the senator met with "Malacañang operatives" in Cebu last week to help him hold with the Pinedas.

Mel Sarmiento, provincial administrator and the governor's campaign manager, said the young Lapid has been a "non-effective leader."

LILIA Pineda, Bong Pineda's wife, appears doubtful in her intention to run for governor of Pampanga, complaining of poor leadership under incumbent governor actor Mark Lapid, son of Gov. Lito Lapid. | www.inquirer.com.ph

Army says top Mindoro NPA leader surrenders

LUCENA CITY—A DISSIDENT RANKING official of the communist New People's Army rebels in the island of Mindoro was forced to surrender to government forces after a successful encirclement operation Friday, according to the spokesman of the military's Southern Luzon Command headquarters in Camp Nakar.

Lt. Colonel Roderick Pacayna identified the rebel as a certain Pablo Sotto, alleged deputy secretary of the Commander Party of the Red Organizational Masters and also the secretary of the NPA's Ilocano Lumagang Dayao Command operating on the island.

Pacayna said government troopers, led by Col. Mario Chan from the Army's 204th Infantry Battalion, initiated the encirclement operation against Sotto after it conserved civilian-styled clothes about 7:30 yesterday in Sitio Ipot, Occidental Mindoro.

"He tried to run to surrender at the Bulusyo residence," Pacayna said.

Sotto was immediately airlifted to the headquarters of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division (Atlas) in Fort Bonifacio in Metro Manila for questioning.

In a related report, government forces belonging to the Army's 76th Infantry Battalion while on combat patrol captured at least 15 suspected killer armed rebels in the village of Bilibid, Mulanay town in Quezon province, Thursday.

Reports said the troopers under Bravo Company from the 76th Infantry Battalion led by 1Sgt. Estadio encountered the communist guerrillas while conducting a meeting with residents in the area.

A gunfight ensued between the government forces and the rebels. The battle lasted for 20 minutes, after which the rebels escaped in different directions, report said.

"The civilians were utilized by the NPAs as shields so that they can escape," the report said.

The soldiers recovered a digital camera, cassette recorder, jungle packs and communist documents.

Reports said bloodstains were seen at the rebels' position indicating that communist guerrillas suffered casualties.

In another report, Sobsoc said a big communist explosive materials were recovered by the military in the village of Patok, Tee, Polangui on Tuesday. Delfin T. Mallari Jr. Inquirer Southern Luzon

1 week of rains kills 4, displaces thousands in Northern, East Samar

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—CONTINUING RAINS IN Northern and Eastern Samar left at the deaths of four people and have been going under water in at least 6,000 families have been displaced.

Northern Samar Gov. Jose Ong, chair of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, said a swollen of Barangay Simba in Mondragon town, the hardest hit by the flooding, forced residents today to escape from the surging waters.

Boy Guerra, admin assistant officer of the Office of Civil Defense in Eastern Visayas, said three were two fatalities and one missing in Pambujan town while another person was reported dead in San Roque town.

The flooding, spawned by the monsoon rain, forced the evacuation of residents in coastal villages in Samar town.

For the past three days, the province experienced heavy rains, which resulted in three of its major rivers (Catubig River in Catarman, Banlic River in Mondragon and Bacayao River in San Roque) overflowing.

The entire town of Lapinig in Eastern Samar was completely submerged in floodwaters yesterday after two of its main rivers overflowed after a week of continuous rain.

Floodwaters were as deep as 15 feet in some parts of the town after the Dao and Gitagum rivers overflowed, according to Mayor Socrates Mercullano.

"The incident was [so] sudden," Mercullano, reached on his mobile phone, told the Inquirer yesterday.

The mayor said that all of his town's 8,000 residents living in 15 barangays were displaced by the flooding, the worst to hit the agriculture town in years.

Among the residents displaced by the flood was Kadena Junior Vice Gov. Palgrocio Jamasmie Jr., a native of Lapinig.

The town is about 122 km from the provincial capital town of Borongan.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
A. Francisco Gold Condominium II,
EDSA Cor. Mapagmahal St.,
Diliman, Quezon City

Isang malugod na pagbati kay ***Ka Erdy Manalo*** *ng* ***Iglesia ni Cristo***

sa inyong

ika-82 kaarawan
ngayong ika-2 ng Enero, 2007

Taos pusong pagbati mula sa buong pamilya ng **DILG** sa pamumuno ni
Kalihim Ronaldo V. Puno

Garci to be tried by CPP's 'people's court'

LICONA CITY—THE CENTRAL Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) has announced that the rebel movement was considering filing charges before the "people's court" against Garci Tolino.

Reyes said the CPP was going to try Garcillano "in order to fully establish the culpability of the case and the people's widespread demand to punish the masterminds of the Arroyo regime's biggest crimes against the Filipino people, including the rigging of the 2004 elections."

The CPP official said that if the proceedings on the Garcillano case were to be carried out, a special people's court would have to be constituted by the revolutionary forces in the area.

"Garcillano himself would be compelled to appear before such proceedings. Otherwise he would have to be tried in absentia," Reyes explained.

He announced the 2001 indictment of all 20 accused in the perjury and falsification charges against Garcillano.

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Reyes said the threatened petitions at the Arroyo administration's widespread use of the cyber-crime law to silence people, including media practitioners, who criticize the government.

GI case custody row adds to GMA woes in '07

Bilibid 'Starbucks' offers coffee, bread, livelihood

From page A1

A coffee shop and bakery located inside the prison compound will also soon add a variety of cakes at affordable prices to its product line.

The Q6 Coffee and Bakeshop, which inmates refer to as their own "Starbucks," was built by the Lamb of God Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded by relatives of child rapist and former congressman Romeo Jalosjos. It is staffed entirely by inmates.

"The shop is here to provide the thousands of inmates with fresh and good-quality bread at prices they can afford," said Superintendent Julius Victor Medalla, who was promoted in 2003 for the killing of Dennis Venturia, a member of the Sigma Rho fraternity, on the University of the Philippines Diliman campus 12 years ago.

As early as 5:30 a.m. every day, dozens of "fresh from the oven" pandesal, hot dog and hamburger buns, pan de sosa, cheese and spanish breads are already available for early morning eating a quick coffee fix, said Medalla.

He said inmates, whose P35 daily food allowance does not allow for such indulgences, need not wait anymore for their families to bring them delicacies of sweets and fresh bread.

There are now very much affordable from the bakery at an average of P2 to P3 each. The shop even sells its own line of ice cream.

'Good enough' cakes

According to Medalla, the line-up of bakery products will be further expanded with the opening of a bakery school earlier this year, to train inmates to whip up cakes "good enough" to serve at birthdays, weddings and other special celebrations that are held inside the prison.

"The purpose of the classes is mainly to teach inmates basic bread-making techniques so they will have new skills that they can use when they get out of prison," he explained.

While many inmates have already expressed interest in taking the course, the Bureau of Corrections is giving priority to those scheduled to be freed in two to three years.

"We want the skills learned from the course to be beneficial to their minds when it's time for them to leave," said Medalla.

Accreditation

The Lamb of God foundation is working to get accreditation from the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center, the government agency that disseminates information on applicable technologies and provides training and funding for those wishing to start businesses using these technologies.

The foundation is also looking to get the TLRC to help it draw up a curriculum suited to the needs of the inmates.

Medalla said the foundation has also asked the Department of Science and Technology to help the bakery in the introduction of fortified breads which would be healthier for the inmates.

Back to old life

Pascual Pascua Jr., 35, is one inmate for whom life at the penitentiary approximates his old life.

Pascua is one of 21 inmates with culinary skills in Bilibid who work at the prison bakery till they needed was a short "refresher course" before being put to work at the bakery.

Pascua, who was convicted for murder and has been in prison for eight years, said he had worked at a bakery in Marawi since he was 15.

"I am happy that I am back to doing my old job. I thought I was of no use, but I feel worthy now," he said.

MANAY City Jail chief Daniel Smith declined to have any team... AFP/Lauro C.

From page A1

Dennis, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Solicitor General Eduardo Rachosa and Presidential Legal Adviser Sergio Apostol.

Also in contempt, according to Reyes, is Makati City Jail Warden Medel Destro.

The government claims that the custody was in compliance with the decision of Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon to detain Smith at the Makati City Jail until the Philippines and the United States signed on his place of detention in accordance with the VFA.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government said Pozon's decision was fully complied with and Smith's transfer authorized because Foreign Secretary Alberto and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney signed an agreement on Smith's detention at the US Embassy annex compound.

But Reyes said the contempt is about the Rules of Court.

Like Benedict Arnold

Presidential anti-graft czar Leonardo-de Asis also failed to stand up for the dignity of the Philippine judiciary. "She's guilty of gross lackadaisical in the manner of Benedict Arnold."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez downplayed the possibility that the Palace declare its treaties beside to the US Embassy would trigger massive protests that would cause Mr. Arroyo's downfall.

He said there would be no political fallout.

"There is no groundswell of opposition to this arrangement and there are many Filipinos who think that Smith is not guilty," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez took offense at criticisms that the President had turned coddler when she ordered the transfer of Smith.

"She's acting in accordance with the rule of law. How can you be a traitor when you are on the side of the law?" he said.

Besides, he said, the prosecutors—through the Office of the Solicitor General—made it clear that it was taking the side of Smith only on the issue of custody, not on the question of his guilt or innocence.

The justice secretary said that those attacking the President may now know their law.

Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Ruben Reyes said the transfer of Smith ahead of the final decision of an appellate division on the matter did not constitute an affront to the court.

Open to interpretation

Reyes said the 40th division's decision is simply open to "interpretation" and that the prosecutors and movants could be open to "interpretation."

Besides, Reyes said the issue is that "presumably," he maintains, he "misunderstood" about the transfer of Smith.

"Presumably, I want to be open-minded about it. Until the court has spoken, the matter is subject to interpretation," he said.

He said he was just expressing his own views because the issue was not addressed by the division under Associate Justice Apolinario D. Bruselas Jr.

Supervening event

In a resolution issued on Friday, Bruselas again clearly "noted" the manifestation and motion filed by the solicitor general on Dec. 28 informing the court that there was a "supervening event" in the case.

"You know that 'noted' is neither a grant, nor a denial. I expect that by next week, there would be a decision on the case," Reyes said.

He said the supervening event—the signing of an agreement between the US Embassy and the Department of Foreign Affairs on the transfer of Smith to the US Embassy—may "cast a different light" on the issue.

Contempt of court

But he said a definitive ruling by the Bruselas division this week may finally "clear up" the issue.

Reyes said it was unlikely that the court would vote to contempt powers against those who ordered or caused the transfer of Smith.

"Mentally, while there are considerations [even, the court does not exist] for contempt of court [procedure]," he said.

Fugitive

Evelyn Ortua, Nicole's lawyer, said Smith was a fugitive from justice.

"People should remember that he is a convicted criminal and yet he walked out of prison aided by the US Embassy and our own government's executive officials. They acted in circumstances to make the transport possible," Ortua said.

But Smith's lawyer, Jose de Venecia, disagreed. "That is just their propaganda statement," she said.

De Venecia said that for him to be branded a fugitive, "[the person] must escaped and is beyond the reach of the law."

"But Smith did not escape. He was only transferred to another confinement. If the court wants us to produce him, we will produce him. A fugitive is someone who hides in the mountains," she said.

De Venecia added that Smith's transfer from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy "is a diplomatic, provisional to government thing."

A BJMP official said he received assurance from top US Embassy security officials that Smith was confined to his 12-square-foot "detention cell" in the embassy premises.

Marian Corpus, the inmate on documentary overseeing the flat, is only "chief supervisor" and Presidago said that if everything went as planned, he said the rest of the Philippines "scandal team" would see for themselves the situation of the inmate today.

—"The Associated" said that even if the embassy is closed, we will be allowed to enter," Corpus told the inmates.

US holiday today

US President George W. Bush has declared Jan. 2 a national day of mourning in memory of former US President Gerald Ford who died last week. Federal offices, including US embassies, will be closed.

"We are civil law anytime. We are just finishing the composition of the custodial team. We're waiting for the PNP to come up with their members," Corpus said.

The final composition of the custodial team will be announced today by Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno.

Corpus said he had received an assurance from US officials that Smith would be preserved in court should it be required by the Court of Appeals.

Gonzalez said Malacañang was ready to go to the Supreme Court to ensure that Smith would remain in US custody should the Court of Appeals rank Smith's petition to nullify an order of a lower court committing him to the Makati City Jail. —With a report from Nikko Dizon

Another Bayan Muna leader ...

From page A1

ber killed in Bicol in the last three weeks, after Cris Hendillo, Gil Lopez and Francisco Ramos—who were shot dead in Isabela.

Alvarado was the 42nd activist murdered in the region last year, according to Jose Maria, Bayan Muna-Bicol regional coordinator.

White Corolla

Alvarado was traveling in barangay Sta. Cruz on his way home in barangay San Lorenzo when an unidentified man armed with a .45-cal. pistol shot him in the white Toyota Corolla, police said.

Initial investigation showed that the perpetrator was backed up by two other men who picked up the gunman after the shooting.

The suspects fled toward Bonbon forest in the same village and headed to neighboring San Jose.

SPO2 Edgar Tanoco, investigator, said there were many witnesses to the shooting but they chose to keep silent except to say that the suspects were not wearing helmets.

Police raided Alvarado in the Josefina Belmonte Dona duplex house but he was dead on arrival at 4:58 p.m. "He sustained two gunshot wounds in the left arm," according to Dr. Nanda Salonga.

Cadiz was on his way home to Lupa from his last work in Legazpi City to celebrate New Year's Eve with the family when he received a phone call from his brother telling him to come home immediately.

Smiling in death

"Upon hearing my brother told me that he was killed, I asked him what had happened," Cadiz said.

"When I saw my father in the hospital bed before, I was also he was smiling. I did not see any trace of pain or suffering in him," Carla said.

He said his father was happy during the last dinner supper of his life because they were complete as a family.

His father was about 5 feet, 5 inches but looked tall.

He could command the respect of the people he would meet, according to Carla.

Strict but jolly

"He was very strict but a jolly and loving father with a big vision for the community, such as free medical supplies and activities for the poor people."

Alvarado, who passed the entrance exam for the University of the Philippines, dreamed of becoming a doctor but ended up finishing journalism because his parents could not afford the cost of a medical education.

Cadiz said many people usually came to their house to ask for help from Bayan Muna's medical assistance program. Whenever his father would do something for the people they would give him insecticides, vegetables and "camote" (sweet potato) in return.

Lived life to fullest

"My father lived his life to the fullest and died selflessly, for it be an eye-opener. He are proud of him," Cadiz said.

Alvarado died fulfilled because he was able to help a lot of people, according to his wife Francisca.

Before he left for work, Hendillo received by her husband because there were only birthday greetings in his cellphone, she said.

"The only New Year's gift we could give him is to continue the good things he started," Francisca said.

Big help to pace

Gilda Ordiano, 38, a farmer from barangay Buang in Lupo, came to Alvarado's house yesterday to see for herself if the news that Hendillo died was true.

"He could not believe he is gone. He was a big help to the poor people in our village," Ordiano said.

She quietly accompanied the poor villagers to their place in Alvarado's house whenever they needed assistance.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said the killing of Alvarado was meant to weaken the party-list group's chances in the May elections.

But he said the killings of Bayan Muna members would not deter the group from holding candidates.

"They will turn our grief into a stronger commitment to champion pro-poor policies and the policies of change. The death squads of President Arroyo's Oplan Bantay Laya may kill our leaders and members, but they cannot run. Bayan Muna leaders and people in Metro Manila, Bayan Muna president, said in a statement.

Formed by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and allied progressive groups in 1999, Bayan Muna formed the party-list elections in 2001.

It emerged No. 1 with 1.8 million votes, the highest in the party-list system, giving it members Ocampo, Crispin Beltran and Liza Maza as seats in the House of Representatives.

Bayan Muna regained this top in 2004, obtaining 1.2 million votes, still the highest among party-list groups, thus retaining it three seats. Allied peasant group Anakpawis has two seats, while women's group Gabriela, one seat.

Bayan Muna predicted more killings of members next year.

2-year deadline

"As a member of a respected family in the community, he was not spared by his tyrannical death squad," De Guzman said.

"The incident only shows that Makatarungan is ready to do anything just to beat the two-year deadline imposed by the Supreme Court on party-list nominees," Perena said in a statement.

Lt. Col. Roderick Parayno, spokesperson of the Southern Luzon Command, said it was unlikely that the military killed Alvarado. Police regional director Chief Supt. Eliseo de Alumbre, Daño C. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon, and AFP

'2007 election crucial ...

From page A1

direction of governance in a country that has lurched from one crisis to another over allegations that President Macapagal-Arroyo cheated in the 2004 polls.

Speaking for the administration coalition, House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said the elections would "play a critical role" in setting that direction.

"The administration and the opposition will start counting their numbers depending on the election results," said Nograles.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the Filipinos' hope for a better future hinged on the credibility of the May elections.

"Elections empower the people and enable them to participate directly in governance while promoting accountability in the same time," he said.

Nograles said the political party that would secure supporters in both chambers of Congress would have an edge in the next political landscape till 2007 and determine the nation's immediate future.

"Election do have it up to the ait and there is any link that the House can draw this point," said Nograles.

Check corruption

But Senator claimed that the government should curb "or at least limit corruption and abuses of governments power by retaining equal and fair application of the laws evenly."

Presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio said winning a credible election was part of the agenda of President Macapagal-Arroyo for this year.

While pushing for Charter change continues to be the administration's priority, however, Claudio believed that should be deferred until after the May polls.

"There is nothing whatsoever about our bid for Charter change but its timing and the manner for going about it should be determined by the people through consensus," he said.

In a phone interview yesterday, Claudio said the challenge for the administration is the new year lay in closing ranks to "manage the political developments in the country in a way that will not deter but rather boost the momentum of the economic takeoff."

This has become critical especially now that "there are visible signs of the country's economic takeoff," he said.

Markets watching

He said all efforts at destabilization "should be totally eliminated from the political scene in order to protect the present momentum of our economic progress."

Claudio underscored the need for the administration to eliminate or "keep to the barest minimum, political tensions and uncertainties in the country.

"The markets, investors, businessmen and creditors wear positively to signs of government being in control of the political situation," he said.

Administration win is 'wise'

Asked how the elections could affect the political climate, he said: "If the results are less favorable to the administration, it can dampen the business climate and investor confidence in the country."

He said this now why an administration victory in the polls "is a wise and reasonable investment for people to make in 2007."

"The stability of the country depends on the victory of the administration," he said.

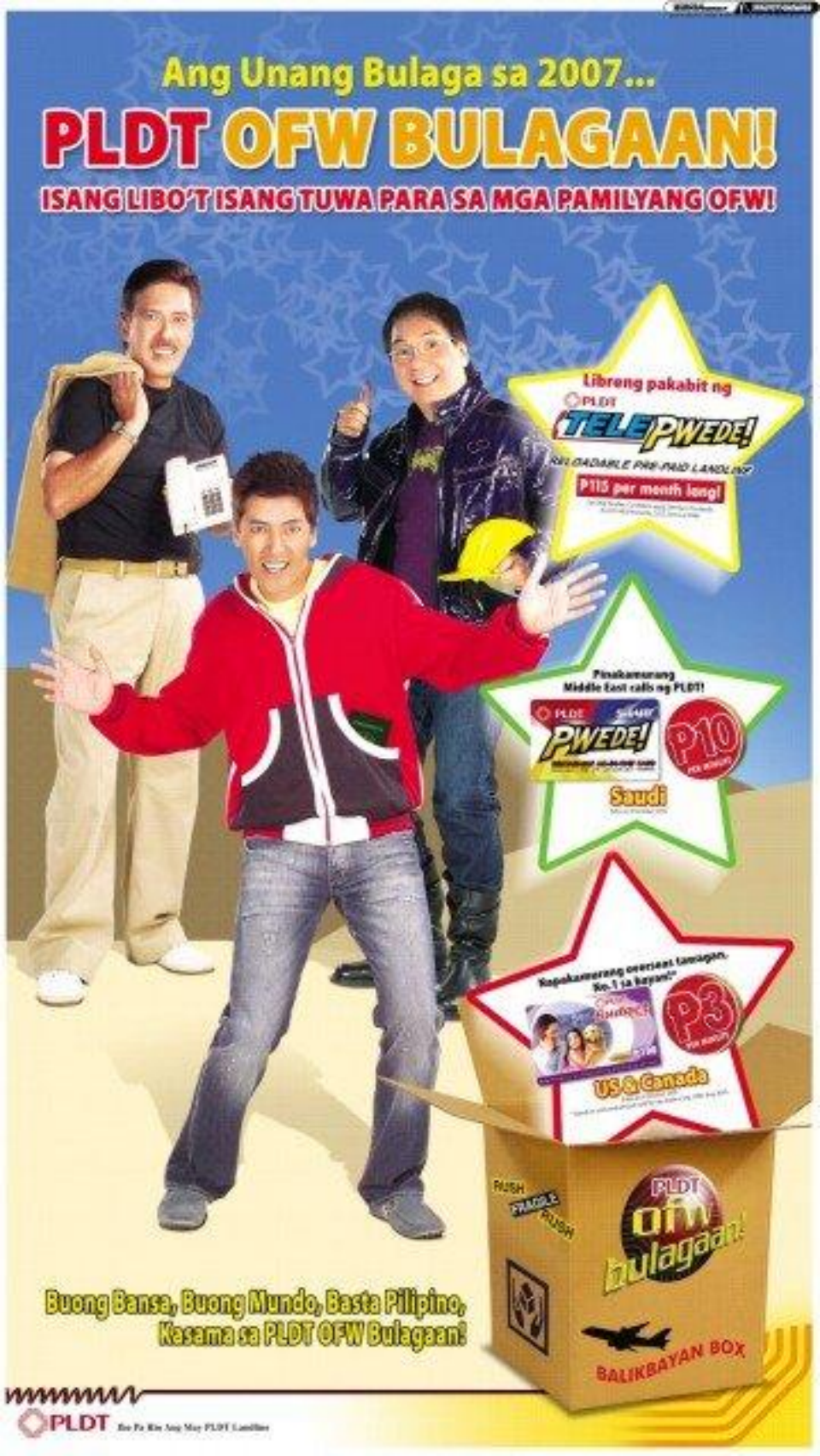
Claudio said the administration was confident not only of being able to put up a "formidable" lineup of candidates in the senatorial and local contests but of achieving a nationwide campaign that would ensure victory in May.

He said it was important for the administration to hold credible and fair and orderly elections because that would "maintain, at least enhance, the economic stability of the country."

Claudio said he would like to believe that people were inclined to support the administration candidates "because there are strong and visible indications of its economic recovery which can be sustained if the administration can pass a convincing victory in the elections."

HOPEFULS: Election fever in the air

ESCUDERO: Credibility of May polls


Ang Unang Bulaga sa 2007...
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LACSON: Out

Lacson out of mayoral race

Senator says residency problem prompted decision

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. PANFILO "PING" LACSON is seeking reelection after all.

Over the possibility of being disqualified over questions about his residency, the opposition senator has abandoned his much-talked-about plan to run for mayor of Manila in this year's May elections.

"Yes, I'm not running for mayor anymore. I'll just seek reelection," Lacson said in a phone interview, confirming speculations that he was dropping his bid for the city's top post.

The senator said he made his decision after his legal staff conducted a thorough research into the matter. He also held several consultations with legal luminaries and election lawyers, who all advised him to drop his bid because there was a much bigger chance of him getting disqualified because he might not be able to meet some residency requirements.

"One persistent election lawyer told me that I have less than a 50 percent chance of not getting disqualified," Lacson said, referring to lawyer Nilo Bil-

LACSON, A 10

New Year's Day shooting leaves nine people hurt

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

GUNSHOTS RANG AT THE SAME MOMENT neighbors in a village in Pasig City broke into cheers to welcome the New Year.

The residents were just holding a street party in Barangay Dela'ye when four men opened fire at them.

Nine persons, including two girls, were seriously injured yesterday while 30-year-old Eduardo Bernardo was killed, running the revelry into grief.

The forces leading to the New Year also turned bloody as security aides in two cars were also killed in separate incidents in the cities of Pasig and Marikina.

Police said the victims of the shooting spree in Pateño were holding a party along with other neighbors on Kanlaon Street on New Year's Eve.

When the residents started cheering at midnight, four unidentified men motorcycles drove into the street.

Seconds later, gunshots drowned the cheers. The four men, armed with .45-caliber and 9 mm handguns, suddenly started firing at the group, police chief Senior Supt. Francisco Uyanni said.

"The (four men) shot randomly. They did not aim whoever was hit," Uyanni also told the Inquirer, quoting witnesses.

The residents scampered away, trying to procure themselves and then heard cries from the side of Dalibis.

But the shooting spree did not spare 5-year-old Jeanica Grace Kapulit and 6-year-old Rona Domogoytes.

Police said the following residents were also seriously injured: Asmanilo Paluli, 30; Roberto Jalvilla, 43; Johnny Mamagpas,37; Ruben Felan, 28; Jenny Laprisa, 32; Eduardo

NEW YEAR'S, A 10

'Kwitis' burns roof of church in Las Piñas

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Tessa B. Salazar

A FIRE STARTED BY A FIRECRACKER destroyed a church in Monteverde Subdivision, Las Piñas City, on New Year's Day.

According to witnesses, a firecracker (day cracker) landed on the roof of the Mary Immaculate Parish Church, also known as the Visitacion Church, "shortly after midnight yesterday.

The fire, which reached the second alarm, spread quickly because the roof was made of flammable materials, said Las Piñas deputy fire marshal Alfredo Solano.

No one was reported killed or injured in the incident although damage to the church was estimated at around P500,000, according to fire investigator SPO2 Roberto Soles.

Not insured

But Father Fidel Bilido, the church parish priest, placed the damage at nearly a million pesos. He said the church was not insured against fire.

The fire ate up the entire roof which was made of 40,000 amakan leaves topped with a canvas sheet. It also destroyed 12% laminate made from capiz but the church seats and pews, made out of tree stumps and logs killed by pest epidemic, were spared.

Hundreds of residents in the subdivision rushed out of their houses and went to the site of the church, which sits on a 4,000-sq m lot, when they saw the fire.

The 20-year-old church was conceptualized by architect Francisco "Bobby" Mariano.

Bilido said residents tried to put out the fire with pails of water but failed to do so because they could not reach the 30-foot high roof.

KWITIS, A 10

NBI: Raids, arrests hiked price of shabu

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE STREET PRICE OF METHAMPHETAMINE hydrochloride (shabu) rose from P5,000 to almost P10,000 per five grams last year, according to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Anti-Illegal Drugs Task Force.

NBI National Capital Region (NCR) chief and task force commander Noel Lasala attributed the price increase to the scarcity of the drug following the dismantling of numerous shabu laboratories and the apprehension of drug traffickers.

Lasala said that from 2000 to 2005, the price of shabu remained stable at P5,000 per gram. "The demand has remained the same despite the diminished supply of shabu," he explained.

According to the NBI official, the task force's most significant achievements last year were the arrest of Amado Inson Bontilao and his wife Sharon Sun Bontilao.

The couple allegedly owned the shabu market in Pasay City and supervised other illegal drug-related businesses worth almost a billion pesos.

The task force also arrested suspected drug trafficker Ned Tan in Caloocan City last August. Tan allegedly operated a clandestine shabu laboratory in Bataan.

Lasala said the apprehension of Mike Mohammadsan and Emily Enrile in Quiapo, Manila in last year also significantly reduced the supply of shabu in the area.

On the other hand, the dismantling of a Chinese drug clique in Bocaue, Bulacan in late March resulted in the arrest of 76 drug pushers, users, runners and couriers, and the confiscation of assorted drug paraphernalia.

The NBI also busted a clandestine shabu laboratory in Dingalan, Aurora last August, arrested four Chinese suspects and confiscated P120 million worth of crystalline and liquid drugs.

At least P168 million worth of ephedrine, a primary shabu ingredient, were seized in Quiapo, Manila, in June. Lasala added, the operation also led to the arrest of two pushers.

Aside from shabu-related operations, the bureau last year seized 53,000 vials of lorazepam—a drug used by young people during rave parties—in a house in Dasmariñas City. They also arrested the owners of the drugs, a Pakistani identified as Hanif Abdulhamid.

WORKERS of Bahay Pangarap produce environment-friendly wooden educational toys which are sold in the Philippines and in other countries.

A dreamland for toy makers

By Bell. Santos
Contributor

AFTER OPENING THEIR HOLIDAY presents, children, at times, would ask their parents: Who made our toys? Mommy and Daddy would show the hard pressed to come up with imaginative answers such as "the elves in the North Pole" or "high-tech robots."

These replies are certainly preferable to the use "Overworked and underpaid (Chinese) factory workers who could be locked behind all the carcinogenic and mutagenic chemicals while making dime-sized plastic parts." Parents know that talking about the toy makers' plight would be enough to ruin their children's fun.

The Bay Local movement hopes that parents would somehow provide better answers to the question.

With the "Buy Local, Buy Fair Campaign," the movement calls for parents to consider carefully the ways they give their children. It also offers an alternative: socially and environmentally friendly toys like the ones at Bahay Pangarap. Their wooden educational toys go beyond colors and designs. The story of the toy makers of Bahay Pangarap can fill one's whole bedtime story session in itself.

As a Fatawatch old baby in Olongapo City, Rebecca Ibanez was smitten with polio. Coming from a poor family that could not afford to feed her enough, much less send her to school when she was growing up, Rebecca did not have much hope of being able to work or even move her own body.

The same was true of Edgar Arroyo who dreamed of becoming a doctor. But because of polio, he lost his hope of becoming someone of any importance in the family and society. He believed himself and was only saved by a caring person who rallied him out of his depression and even him to school.

Edgar finished high school but because he is disabled, he could not get any work. Not to his homeowners of Jam. Dolls, and its Manila office where he fled to in search of better fortune.

Today, Rebecca and Edgar share one thing in common: they are disabled persons who have become productive, thanks to Bahay Pangarap. A subsidiary of Talisaang Bulang Magdaraan, it provides a home and livelihood for disabled persons who aspire to be productive despite their handicaps.

The two are among the 40 disabled members of the 64-strong workforce of Bahay Pangarap's woodcraft factory in Barangay San Agustin, Subic Bay Freeport Zone. It churns out educational toys and packaging materials made out of pallets, excess wood from sawmills and the plywood replacement material called Modified Density Fiberboard (MDF).

Its products also reach foreign markets such as the US, UK, Italy, Belgium, Japan and the Middle East, Brunei and.

SOME of the toys are also used in Montessori schools.

Judge orders apprehension of suspected illegal recruiters

By Tina G. Santos

A MANILA JUDGE HAS ORDERED THE arrest of four people who allegedly duped several job seekers more than six years ago.

Judge Silvino Pampilo Jr. of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 26 issued warrants for the arrest of Yvonnarda Magpoc, a resident of Navotas, Batangas; Florence Cabilao, of La Trinidad, Benguet; and Rolando Bernard and Regina Prado, both of Tondo, Manila.

No bail was recommended for the four who are now facing several counts of estafa and illegal recruitment, the judge said.

"I urge other people who had been lured with promises of jobs abroad by these suspects to come forward and lodge complaints," Pampilo added.

At least 30 complainants said that in July 2000, they applied for work at 4F/M Commercial Manpower Services in Ermita, Manila.

They claimed that the suspects, who identified themselves as employees of the company, offered to help send them to South Korea as factory workers. The suspects also asked them to pay almost P1 million in placement and processing fees.

Two of the victims, Liberato Francisco and Lorena Saba, claimed that they gave P120,000 and P60,000, respectively to the suspects.

After several months, the victims were denied visas but these were discovered to be fake when immigration officers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport refused to let them leave the country.

The victims claimed they later learned that the suspects were not employees of the recruitment agency which prompted them to file complaints against the four.

A certification issued by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency also showed that the suspects were not licensed or authorized to recruit workers for overseas employment.

OF THE 30 WORKERS at Bahay Pangarap, 40 are persons with disabilities.

DID YOU KNOW

Makati became a city on Jan. 2, 1995, when then President Fidel V. Ramos signed Republic Act 7854. On Feb. 4, 1995, the city charter was ratified by an overwhelming 80 percent of the voters who participated in the plebiscite. CHRIS L. ROMERO, MUSHER WANAFF

'Kwitis' burns roof...

From page A-12

"At 15 minutes, the place was like an inferno," Pulido said.

Alberto Baron, the chamber's guard on duty, claimed he saw a firecracker land on the roof and asked a policeman to call firefighters.

Lawyer arrested

During the fire, a lawyer attempted to break into the adjoining lawyer's Café Inc. was quickly apprehended by other guards.

The Sarayo Church was initiated by Italian priest Father Pietro Bagliardi, whether Korea member for his work on Kamias Village, a housing project for the poor inside Monserrat Subdivision.

Bagliardi had earlier expressed concern about firecrackers burning the roof of the church.

Considered a landmark in the Philippine in addition to the more famous Basilica Minore, the church was featured in European magazines.

A separate chapel (a mini version of the Manila Church), the Blessed Sacrament, a maternity clinic, a school, the cafe and the parish office were spared from the fire.

'City of Stars' wants to hold its own film festival

By DJ Yap

MOVIE ONES, METRO MANILA Film Festival and Cinemanila, Make room for the Quezon City Film Festival.

Quezon City, which used to be known as the "City of Stars" for its promotion of the movie industry, has announced plans for the launching of its own film festival.

To be launched by this year or in 2008 at the latest, the film festival shall be organized by the newly-created Quezon City Film Development Commission, officials said in a statement.

Proponents for the film festival are already under way, particularly with the establishment of the Quezon City Film Foundation, the implementing arm of the commission.

The commission was formed through a city ordinance that Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. signed late last June.

Under the ordinance, it shall be the policy of the Quezon City government to "promote and support the development and growth of the local film industry."

It also orders the QC Film Development Commission to "establish, organize, operate and subsidize local and international film festivals, exhibitions and similar activities" for the city.

In addition, the commission should develop an incentive system for, among others, film producers, directors, scriptwriters and cinematographers to encourage the production of quality films in the city.

The 15 members of the new commission include Vice Mayor Herbert Bautista, the majority and minority leaders of the city council, the head of the city's cultural and tourism affairs office and representatives of Mowelfund and the Federation ng mga Artista ng Pelikulang Pilipino at Telebisyon.

New Year's Day shooting...

From page A-12

Edroy, 32, and Evelyn Rubilla, 45.

Fernanda was rushed along with his nine injured neighbors to the Pasig City General Hospital, but he was declared dead on arrival.

Neighbors told the police the shooting spree could be the work of a dead group.

The villagers in the barangay are divided into ethno-linguistic groups, Ustral explained.

He said they would investigate reports linking the shooting spree to a stabbing incident in the city about a week ago, where some members of the two different groups of villagers figured in a brawl, leaving two dead.

"Some witnesses told us some members of that other group threatened to get even with them," Ustral added.

Police are also investigating the killing of 53-year-old driver Cesar Concepcion in Barangay Ganzagas, also in Pasig City.

He attackers not only stabbed him in the chest and belly but also shot him in the back while he was on Sto. Antonio Avenue at about 10:45 p.m. on Sunday police said.

In Marikina City, 35-year-old Dindo Os-Osan was also stabbed to death after he tried to pacify a brawl between two drunk men.

The alleged attacker, 43-year-old Jacob Reis, also sustained wounds after he, too, ended up being stabbed.

The police said Reis and a man police identified only as Tonio were fighting when Os-Osan approached them to pacify them. Reis then stabbed the victim.

My New Year's resolutions

THE START OF A NEW YEAR IS a time to make resolutions to make one a better person in the coming year.

I have my own New Year's resolutions and they are:

I will try to be a better journalist.

I will be honest. If I am caught cheating, I will resign to save the profession of journalism from further shame.

If I am very sick, I will not hide my illness from my friends. Neither will I hide it from my editors and readers for they should know my state of mind. A sick journalist may not be in the proper state of mind to do his job.

I will only harass my subscribers to renew. If I make the mistake of sending a subscriber in public, I will immediately apologize to him or her. My subscribers also have feelings.

I will not cover up for my friends in media. I will choose a lover who is of my age. I will not choose a lover who is young enough to be my daughter.

I will not allow my spouse to vote my children as a journalist. I will tell her that it's not. not her, who will be blamed if the politico influence.

If I find out that my spouse has a lover or lovers, I will immediately break up with her. It's SHE, not to pretend that all's well with me and my spouse in order to please the public. Our friends are not that stupid not to see through.

I will be faithful to my spouse. If I can't be,

POPE Benedict XVI waves as he holds on his beak the 'In Deum prayer in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 31. REUTERS

NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Pope calls for Middle East peace agreement

VATICAN CITY—POPE BENEDICT XVI CALLED Monday for a peace accord in the Middle East, embroiled in a "conflict that has persisted for too long," during his New Year's Day Mass at St. Peter's Basilica.

Marking World Peace Day, he referred to "the scene of the shepherds at Bethlehem visiting Jesus in the manger," adding: "How can you not look again at the dire situation that characterizes the land where Jesus was born?"

The 79-year-old Pontiff added: "How can you not implore with insistent prayer that the day of peace arrives as soon as possible in this region, the day when the conflict that has persisted for too long will be resolved?"

"Peace accord, for the dawn, must rest on respect for dignity and the rights of each person," he urged the Vatican diplomatic corps attending the Mass.

In the face of the threats to peace that are rife Constantly over present, in the face of situations of injustice and violence that persist in many parts of the world, before continuing armed conflicts often forgotten by much of public opinion, and the danger of terrorism that disturbs peoples' serenity, it becomes more than ever necessary to work together for peace," he said.

On Dec. 23 Benedict sent a message to the world's 1.1 billion Catholics ahead of World Peace Day in which he condemned what he called the "misinterpretation of religion" "acts in ideology," and said that "a war in the name of God is never acceptable."

The wide-ranging message also condemned violations of religious freedoms, inequality of the sexes, "disrespectful" attitudes toward the environment, religious conflicts unrelated to "ideological" terrorism, human rights abuses and the spread of nuclear weapons.

"The way to ensure a climate of peace for everyone is found not only in international accords for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also in the determined commitment to seek their reduction and definitive dismantling," the Pontiff said.

In his first public address of the year, Pope Benedict said world peace was only "to be achieved if individuals' human rights are respected, ensuring that there can be no excuse for treating people as "objects."

Two days after the hanging of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein—an event the Vatican condemned as "tragic"—the Pope said on Monday that human rights must be put at the heart of the global struggle to end wars.

"It is because every human individual, without distinction of race, culture or religion, is created in the image and likeness of God, that he is filled with the same dignity of person," Benedict said in a sermon in St. Peter's Basilica.

"That is why he must be respected. No reason can ever justify doing with him whatever one pleases, as if he is an object," he said. AFP, Reuters

WorldBriefs

Dog mauls girl

LONDON—A 5-year-old girl was mauled to death by a dog at her home in northern Hertfordshire Monday police said. The dog, which police described as a "cat-sized terrier type dog," attacked the girl and a woman, believed to be the child's grandmother, at the home of the girl's family in a house in St Albans, near Luton airport northeast England. The woman was seriously injured and is being treated in hospital, but the girl was fatally wounded on the attack. "This is such a tragic incident. If there is any information that anyone has, it may be of great assistance, then we would urge them to contact us," police superintendent Jon Wilcox said in a statement. Reuters

More survivors found

JEMBER—Indonesian fishermen and search and rescue teams have found around 200 survivors, as last weekend's search for survivors of a ferry disaster in the country's remote Java Sea entered its fifth day. Fishing vessels and helicopters have braved continuing bad weather and rough seas to scour the waters off the north coast of Java where the "Senopati Nusantara" ship disappear. Commander Yusuf Kartanegara said that 172 survivors had been rescued, the official Antara news agency quoted the transport ministry as saying. Sun transport Minister Hatta Rajasa later said: "537 had been saved, with 536 already ashore and others being brought to our ships. AFP

Final stand

NAIROBI—Somali warlords fled on Monday from their final stronghold toward the Kenyan border in what could mark the end of a nearly two-week war with the Ethiopian-backed government. Several thousand Somalia Islamic Courts Council (SICC) fighters, who had made a last stand north of Kismayo port, ended many overnight after artillery, Ethiopian and government troops shelled their front line, witnesses said. The leaders and fighters of the SICC—who were driven from Mogadishu on Thursday—had further south from the Indian Ocean port toward neighboring Kenya, residents said. Some hydrated Kismayo residents in Kismayo region of Bour Gaabo, across the Somali side of the border. Reuters

Cleric's warning

TEHRAN—Iran's former spiritual leader has urged government leaders of the country were its atomic work will have consequences for the future and the Middle East, press agencies have reported. Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, told worshippers at Tehran University on the occasion of the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha (Sacrifice) that there would be consequences if Iran was blocked entirely over its nuclear work, Mehr news agency reported. "We have dangerous circumstances. If we don't solve the problem with negotiations, it will lead to dangerous consequences. We must not produce material that could be used in bombs," Montazeri said. "We have dangerous circumstances. If we don't solve the problem with negotiations, it will lead to dangerous consequences. We must not produce material that could be used in bombs," Montazeri said. Reuters

Belarus signs last-minute gas deal with Russia

MINSK/MOSCOW—BELARUS AGREED AT THE last minute a deal on Russian gas supplies to succeed, avert a threatened supply cut on Monday that would likely have hit deliveries to western Europe.

A new contract envisages a roughly fourfold increase in the price of Russian gas supplies to Belarus over the next five years, which coupled with a massive hike in Russian oil import duties effective Monday, is likely to put new scrutiny on Belarus' economy, traditionally one of Moscow's closest allies.

Speaking to journalists in Moscow shortly after the deal was signed, Belarusian Prime Minister Sergei Sidorsky did not hide his disappointment.

"The Belarusian side, in a difficult atmosphere on the eve of the New Year, signed an agreement on unfavorable conditions," he said.

As part of the deal Belarus agreed to sell 50 percent of its strategically important gas pipeline operator Beltransgaz to Russian gas monopoly Gazprom, according to a breakdown of the deal provided by the Russian company.

In recent years, the Belarusian government has vociferously resisted such a sale.

Under Sunday's deal, Belarus will pay $53.90 for 1,000 cubic meters of gas in 2007, just below the $105 earlier demanded by Russia, but the higher fuel duty Eid charged under the previous contract, suppose and in the meantime.

Over the five years covered by the contract, the price of gas will climb annually to reach the "market price" charged to western European countries, it said.

Most of Gazprom's Oil customers pay over $200 per 1,000 cubic meters of Russian gas.

Coming in the wake of a recently announced hike in Russian duties on oil exports to Belarus, Sunday's deal appears to mark the end of six-year of sharp energy supplies from Russia that have underpinned the Belarusian economy since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Speaking soon after the deal in a joint New Year's address, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said the deal had "no concern raised a "new economic reality."

In an apparent reference to Russia, Lukashenko spoke of "a blow to our unbridled friendship" and called on the population to "budget more carefully." AFP

Smoking ban takes effect in HK

HONG KONG—AFTER PARTYING IN to the New Year, Hong Kong's pubs raised caterwaling new laws Monday banning smoking in indoor public places, but bar and restaurant owners insist the measures will be unenforceable.

The risk prosecution if the law is flouted, while smokers face on-the-spot fines of 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (US$646) if they are caught lighting up in bars, restaurants and karaoke lounges.

And in an effort to enhance the law, the Hong Kong health department's Tobacco Control Office has sent teams of inspectors into the community.

While business leaders warned the new measures would hit off trade in Hong Kong's nightlife, tourism and entertainment, people on the street gave the new law the thumbs up.

"It means I can drink and not come out. I'm not drinking like no teh kiap" said waitress Mabelen Goh the morning after a night partying to welcome in the New Year.

At the popular Island Bay, Bar in many others around town, pub managers monitored at the stroke of midnight and signs were erected warning patrons against smoking.

"Everyone from went outside for a drag—they all seemed to fall in line without complaint," said one revellor.

The legislation, which had been under consideration for more than a decade, was finally passed in October with huge support among lawmakers.

It is aimed not so much at curbing smoking among the semi-million people who already do so, but to prevent, the law states increase the health of the 200,000 people employed in the hospitality industry who would otherwise be exposed to second-hand smoke.

The new law applies to all indoor places of entertainment or business and some outdoor places, such as beaches.

Some 750 premises have been given temporary exemptions and may allow smoking until 2009, but the rest of the city's thousands of bars, restaurants and clubs must comply with the new law.

Despite the dominant's passage, there is deep resentment among some in the hospitality industry, who argue that tighter restrictions are needed.

Huge street demonstrations were held during the year by bar and restaurant staff, who feared the ban would discourage tourists from their premises.

"Changing the atmosphere here is part of the law," said one barman at the Delicious bar, a popular watering hole on Lamma Island, a small leafy isle about a ride from downtown. AFP

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Dumol

New Year bomb blasts grip Bangkok

BANGKOK—THAILAND GRAPPLED ON MONDAY WITH THE mystery of who ordered a series of blasts that killed three people in Bangkok, wounded 38, including nine foreigners, and ruined New Year celebrations.

The military-installed government and intelligence pointed to politicians who had lost power, not Muslim militants waging a separatist insurgency in the far south, despite similarities of style.

"We could not at this stage pinpoint which particular group was involved," said Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, installed after a bloodless coup 15 months ago to end the Thaksin Shinawatra regime's rule of corruption, which supporters say he can still manipulate from self-exile.

Until now, various intelligence agencies, based on evidence available, shared the same line: groups that have lost political power," Surayud told a news conference in police and military uniform and joined by his cabinet.

"There were no ties to the previous government, but include all those which have lost power in the past," he added while refusing to say what evidence the government had.

Thaksin's lawyer called the implications a "smear campaign." And he said it found "no connection" to the bombings. Thaksin, who has since moved to London, has denied any role in the violence.

"There is a possibility of further attacks in coming days," the American Embassy said on its Web site (www.usembassy.or.th).

Southernmost of Muslim militants, whose insurgency has cost more than 1,300 lives since the past three years but has remained confined to the far south, was a "very remote possibility," Surayud said.

Security minister Pracha Maleenont also agreed, saying the bombings appeared to be politically motivated, perhaps by those being corruption probed by the post-coup government.

"Their aim may be to destabilize the government to make sure the investigations against them are dropped or suppressed," the Thaksin-loyalist Thai Rak Thai Party said in a statement.

Khun Thaksin, who is Buddhist-dominated, not only ousted the his administration scandal-ridden, but many of his supporters have been torched outside Bangkok and martial law kept in several areas because of what the army calls "underground cells" but leading members of Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party have denied it is involved in any form of violent resistance in the south. Reuters

MEMBERS of a Thai bomb squad unit inspect the damage at what was previously a bomb-shut explosion near Bangkok's Victory Monument in Bangkok, Dec. 31. AP

Ban Ki-Moon

The new UN Secretary General

Apr 13 1944	Born in North Chungcheong province, South Korea
1970	Graduates from Seoul National University with degree in international relations
1975-1978	Two assignments at South Korean Embassy in India
1980-1983	Director of consular division at South Korean Foreign Ministry
1985	Graduates post-graduate degree in diplomacy at Harvard University
1987-2001	South Korea's chief envoy to the UN
1994	Becomes South Korea's foreign minister
2001-2004	Chief of staff to President Roh Moo-hyun
Jan 1 2005	Takes over as new head of UN

Source: AP, Reuters, AFP

Sokor's Ban Ki-moon takes over as UN chief

UNITED NATIONS—BAN KI-moon of South Korea takes over as UN secretary general in Monday, facing numerous crises across the globe as well as the challenging task of reforming the United Nations itself.

The 61-year-old diplomat succeeds Kofi Annan, who stepped down in 2005 in the embattled body as its headquarters, while clouds scathed by UN members, notably the most powerful, the United States, which strongly backed his candidacy.

Washington and others want the UN to be more efficient, more and transparent and to counter new crises and management failings a series of scandals, including in the corruption-tainted Iraq oil-for-food program.

Aware of the huge task ahead of him, Ban said in a news conference in December that he wanted to "serve over" in the United Nations.

In subsequent interviews, he promised to devote most of his attention to solving the immediate problems of regional conflicts around the world.

He said he wanted to be a "hardworker" and a "bridge-builder," pointing out that the conflict in the Middle East, the situation in Sudan and the crisis in Darfur would be among his priorities.

Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont said Sunday that Ban's success in his new role at a time of great challenge and opportunity in the United Nations.

"The United States will rely on his leadership to help make the UN more effective through the reforms already underway and to propel the Organization even further on the path of reform," Surayud noted. AFP

Saddam fed birds, seldom complained—nurse

MASTER Sgt. Robert Ellis

AT SOUDA—A MILITARY NURSE who cared for Saddam Hussein in jail said the deposed dictator saved bread scraps to feed birds and seldom complained to his captors, except when he had forgotten pepper.

Master Sgt. Robert Ellis cared for the former Iraqi dictator from January 2004 until August 2005 at Camp Cropper, the compound near Baghdad where Saddam and other "high value detainees" were held.

Ellis, 30, an operating room nurse in the St. Louis suburb of St. Charles, said he was ordered to do whatever was needed to keep Saddam alive.

"That was my job: to keep him alive and healthy, so there would be no reason to have another," he told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch for a story published Sunday. Saddam was executed Saturday.

Ellis checked on Saddam twice a day and wrote a daily report on Saddam's physical and emotional condition.

Saddam told Ellis that cigars and coffee kept his blood pressure down, and it seemed to work. Saddam "would taste that Ellis smoke with him.

Ellis said Saddam did not complain much, and, when he did, his complaints were usually legitimate. "He had very good coping skills," Ellis said.

Saddam shared with Ellis memories of happier times when his children were young. The former dictator described telling the youngest—a daughter, Hala—and giving his daughter Rabi'a Raw tablet when she had a stomachache.

When he was allowed short visits with outside, Saddam would feed the birds crumbs of bread saved from his meals. He also watched a disney plot of animals.

"He told he was a hunter when he was young and he never forgot where he came from," Ellis said.

When Ellis left, Saddam he had to leave his favorite because he knew it was dying. Saddam begged him and said he would be Ellis' brother.

"I was there to help him, and he respected that," Ellis said.

Saddam never discussed dying and expressed no regrets about his rule. AP

Americans pay respects to late president Ford

WASHINGTON—AMERICANS paid their last respects Sunday to former president Gerald Ford, who was praised by former aides and lawmakers for offering steady leadership after the Watergate scandal on the country.

Ordinary Americans filed past Ford's flag-draped casket in the Congress building's Rotunda after being greeted by one of the late president's sons, Jack.

Ford died in California on Dec. 26 at the age of 93, and will be laid in state in the US Capitol Rotunda until Tuesday.

Vice President Dick Cheney, who served as Ford's chief of staff, delivered a speech before the evening hailing Ford for his stewardship in office—describing his performance as his "finest hour."

Cheney said moreover the former president "was almost alone in understanding that there can be no healing without justice." During a time of "great malice" following Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974, Ford "put aside" Nixon's crimes toward the country, Cheney said.

In September 1974, Ford delivered an unconditional pardon for any crimes Nixon may have committed, a move that Nixon's opponents viewed as unfair and led to speculation that a deal had been cut beforehand.

President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush will view the casket at the Capitol on Monday. The series of solemn tributes to Ford will conclude with a national day of mourning in Sunday and a service at the National Cathedral.

The outgoing Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dennis Hastert, described Ford as a "humble man of great character."

In keeping with his family's wishes, the funeral services scheduled for the 38th president will be more casual than those for former president Ronald Reagan two years ago, when a horse-drawn caisson carried Reagan's body through the streets of the capital.

On Wednesday, Ford's remains are to be laid to rest in the Gerald Ford Museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan. AFP

VISITORS wait in line to pay their last respects to former US President Gerald Ford as his body lies in state in the rotunda of the US Capitol in Washington, Dec. 31. AFP

US military deaths in Iraq reach 3,000

WASHINGTON—THE US MILITARY death toll in Iraq has reached 3,000, as warrior-lawmaker the President George W. Bush who is searching for a way to turn around the unpopular war over if it means sending more troops.

The 3000 war, www.icasualties.org, on Sunday listed the death of Spc. Dustin K. Denton, 22, on Dec. 26 as per recently announced and said his death—together with that of an unidentified soldier killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad on Saturday, brought the toll to 3,000.

The mark was reached as Bush weighs options, including a short-term increase in troop of up to 30,000, to help control the deteriorating situation in Iraq where daily violence plagues Baghdad and marked the country.

"Every loss is regretted and there is no special significance to the round number of casualties," Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col Mark McKinnon said.

Analysts called 3,000 deaths a major personal tragedy but said it had limited political and military significance.

Anti-war activists vowed to use the milestone as a rallying to press for the withdrawal of US troops.

US and Iraqi troops have killed 11 rebels suicide in Iraq's capital, despite intensifying efforts there, in battles among Sunni and Shiite Muslim militias, insurgents and government forces as well as Al-Qaida fighters.

Both of the crash in Central, Texas, occurred the death of the 3,000th US soldier, the White House said, but expressed was uneasy about case that an quick end in the war was in sight.

The president has been under pressure to change course in Iraq amid widespread public and political discontent. He is expected to unveil his new strategy next month but has rejected the idea of a timetable for pulling out the 134,000 US troops now in the country. Reuters

Former communist states Bulgaria, Romania join EU

BUCHAREST—FORMER COMmunist states Bulgaria and Romania made it into the European Union on Sunday, a historic occasion that drew thousands to midnight concerts although leaders warned their painful reforms were still needed.

An mid-night swoon in Moscow, the Bulgarian country in the Balkans and Romania, the birthplace of Dracula, with "Ode to Europe" anthem as fans rose to the sky from a 30,000-strong crowd.

The addition of the two former Soviet bloc states brought the number of EU members to 27 and gave the bloc a total population of almost half a billion people.

In a video message to mark the split, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso said: "The founding fathers saw ourselves in the family we know we can, we have heritage, will be richer and better and we and our country will be united." Romania senior while, which had joined the EU in 2004. Invasion at midnight drew the first former communist state to adopt the EU's common currency, the euro.

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett hailed Romania and Bulgaria "great achievement" and said the two countries would bring "their own particular perspectives" to the EU.

But the British premier prime has raised fears that Romanian and Bulgarian criminals could use the opportunity of open borders among EU states to come to Britain.

Bulgaria and Romania's road to EU accession has been long, with repeated calls that Brussels let the Communists in such fields as corruption and organized crime in order to guarantee a properly working member countries.

EU headquarters will be keeping a close eye on whether the new nations continue with reforms and possibly cut off if they do not.

But the mood overnight was full of celebration in the two new EU states.

Romanian Prime Minister Calin Tariceanu spoke of "a reunion of a great, a moment reunion of the 27 soul" since the fall of communism in 1989.

Spectacular sound and light shows lit up the capitals of Sofia and Bucharest, culminating on the stroke of midnight in a blaze of the EU's colors, blue and gold.

The sky exploded with fireworks and cascades of gold EU stars.

The hosts of both cities were a seething mass of revellers wearing hats and woolly hats and dancing to gigantic pop concerts. AFP

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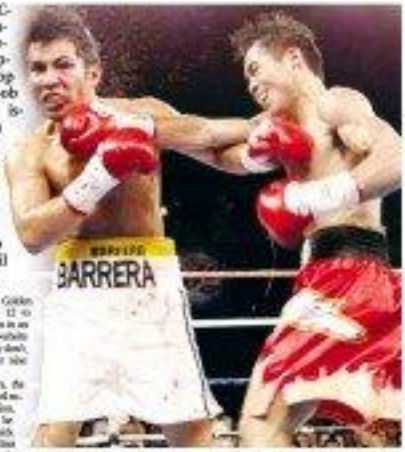
FIGHT PACQUIAO

Arum issues deadline to Barrera

THE MANNY PACQUIAO-Marco Antonio Barrera rematch fast slipping away. Top Rank boss Bob Arum yesterday issued his own deadline for the Mexican champion and his promoter to agree to a $2.5 million offer to face the Filipino ring icon on April 28 in Las Vegas.



"We're giving Barrera and Golden Boy Promotions until Jan. 12 to make a deal," declared Arum in an interview with the ring website Boxingscene yesterday. "If they don't, we'll move on to the other nine [possible] opponents."

Arum said that if Barrera, the reigning World Boxing Council super featherweight champion, fails to meet the deadline, he plans to have Pacquiao pick from among nine other contenders on his list for a fight in Macao on April 28.

Arum's deadline came amid reports from the United States that a Barrera-Juan Manuel Marquez battle on March 17 is all but sealed, leaving Pacquiao—who has emerged as the ring's No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter after his one-sided mauling of Marco Antonio Barrera in their rematch last March—without a name opponent for the only part of 2007.

A top official of the World Boxing Organization who is in Cebu finalizing details of the proposed World Cup pitting Filipino fighters against their Mexican counterparts early this year also confirmed that a Barrera-Marquez fight is a done deal.

Earlier, GBP chief executive officer Richard Schaefer also imposed a deadline for Pacquiao to decide until today whether or not to accept a $3.05-million offer by Barrera on March 17.

The GBP executive had refused to deal with Arum, saying the 75-year-old promoter does not have any promotional rights over Pacquiao.

Under GBP's terms, Pacquiao would also get a share of pay-per-view revenues, as well as exclusive television rights in the Philippines, for his fight, but for all Golden Boy-promoted events in the future.

But Arum stunned, in another interview with Boxing Confidential, that Schaefer does not have the clout to impose a deadline on Pacquiao.

"Look, Schaefer spelled out the (competing ring) deadline on Manny Pacquiao," Arum said. "The senseless is that fight is Manny. It's not Barrera and they know it.

"They know what the PPV numbers are. What's Barrera going to do if he does not fight Manny? He will never fight Marquez, you can be sure of that."

Arum said he knows "the numbers" because he promoted three fights between Barrera and Morales.

The promoter said that in Barrera's last fight, the show only did 150,000 pay-per-view buys, indicating that the fighter does not have the strong Mexican following that Morales enjoyed.

"Barrera at his worst and he does not do 350,000 to 400,000 PPV buys like Marquez and Erik did last time. It," Arum said.

"With Barrera, if you do 250,000 to 300,000 PPV buys, it's a big deal. So they have to decide if they want to fight Manny because, under the WBC rules, if Barrera does not fight Manny, then he must fight [Nicolai] Lilicu."

Arum also promises fans, who he said "will knock Barrera out."

He said Manny Pacquiao (*Arum Ojeda wants him to bring Pacquiao to the former Strongarm stadium to fight an opponent ranked in the Top 10.*

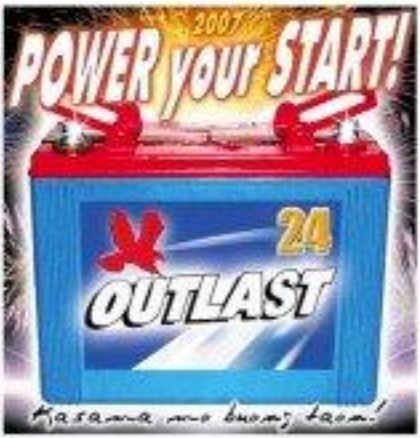
"Arum wants to Manny to fight either in April or in September," Arum said. "He can't fight Ronald Dusk but he can fight one of the guys."

Pacquiao had already expressed interest to go after the crown of Barrera, whom he mopped in a one-side bout in 2003 in Texas.

But the rematch is in peril in the face of the promotional tug-of-war between GBP and Arum's Top Rank outfit.

The conflict started when Pacquiao signed with GBP last September when he went to the U.S. to prepare for his third fight with Morales. Shortly after beating Morales, Pacquiao announced he was sticking it out with Arum and confirmed the partnership only last month. —Sabrina L. Luganday, Contributor

MANNY Pacquiao punishes Marco Antonio Barrera in their non-title fight in San Antonio, Texas in 2003 where the Filipino stopped the Mexican in the 11th round. The Filipino ring icon wants a rematch with Barrera, now the reigning WBC super featherweight champion, but a promotional tug-of-war between Golden Boy Promotions, which handles the Mexican fighter, and Bob Arum's Top Rank outfit, threatens the eagerly awaited showdown. INQUIRER



Kettle Korn-UST cagers unfazed by rocky debut

By Jasmine W. Payo

IT HAS BEEN A ROCKY DEBUT for the Kettle Korn-UST Tigers in the PBL Silver Cup.

But fresh from 2006 Dutch Boy season to start the year with high hopes is the Tigers are winless in seven years.

"At least we're improving," Dutchil said in Filipino. "We're no longer losing by a big margin, we're keeping it close."

Dutchil, the Finals Most Valuable Player in the Tigers' UNAP title run, said that the absence of a veteran dominant backbone leaving the team to bounce.

"We don't have experienced big men like the other teams," he said. "But coach Nico (Antonio) didn't really recruit big players because he's giving our big men a chance to develop."

Hurt the most, Jawaish had no illusion of a strong start. Although the Tigers ruled the UNAP, the rookie mentor notes that the PBL is a tougher league.

Just like the Tigers, the Magnolia Spinners, humiliated by the core of NCAA champion Gee Bedia, have been struggling in the tournament.

The Spinners are just slightly better off than the Tigers with a 2-6 record.

"We have to adjust to the kind of game in the PBL," said Jawaish.

Dutchil adds that the Tigers have one of the youngest teams.

"It's harder for us because a lot of our players in our team are playing for the league for the first time," said Dutchil. "We want to win, but we're also here to get more experience."

Despite the Tigers' slumping skid, Dutchil for kept his usual gusto in (high) gear.

The 5-foot-7 midgeters averages 16.29 points per game, less than a point behind scoring leader Ken Bono of Coloasia Distillers Beer Pilsen (17.300).

No other Kettle Korn player, however, is morning in double figures.

Allen Ong-Siphia, Andrew Espiritu, Jose Gomez and Dylan Andam, the core of the UNAP champion team, have yet to deliver their usual numbers.

"We're learning and I think we're starting to adjust," said Dutchil.

Kettle Korn-UST will resume its campaign versus Mail and More at 2 p.m. on Saturday at the Ateneo College Sports Center in Pamplanga.

In the second game, Hapee-PCU will battle Harbour Centre at 4 p.m.

Herbert Sino leads the nine-team field with a 6-0 card, followed by Mail and More and Hapee-PCU with similar 5-1 slates.

STANDINGS	W	L
Harbour Centre	6	0
Mail and More	5	1
Hapee-PCU	5	1
Talk'n'Text	4	2
Toyota Otis	4	2
Harbour Centre	3	3
GL Peria Pistols	2	4
Magnolia	2	4
Kettle Korn	0	7

GAMES SATURDAY
Ateneo Sports Center
2 p.m. – Mail and More vs Kettle Korn-UST
4 p.m. – Hapee-PCU vs Harbour Centre

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Rosales undecided on WC stint

By Jong Rosales
Editor, Inquirer Golf Monthly

RONDEVOR ROSALES TEMPS HER HOLIDAY FOR THE 2007 LPGA SEASON with coach Gerard Custodia today, hoping to find the winning feel in a one-piece swing transformation that was the main cause of her struggling campaign last year.

Even though "Pebs" will have a lot of rust to cover her game before the first official tournament of the LPGA slated in mid-February, she may have to decide quickly on her participation in the Women's World Cup of Golf in Sun City, South Africa.

The Philippines, one of the 22 countries tipped to compete in the World Cup on Jan. 19-21 at the Gary Player Country Club, will be represented by Rosales and Dorothy Delasin again.

They fired even the tempered World Cup in 2004 but failed to complete last year.

As of yesterday, however, Rosales remained undecided on her World Cup visit.

Aside from the long travel time of at least 24 hours that has her torn considering her rest, Rosales' mother Lenides told the Inquirer yesterday that a corporate outing with top executives of a Big Bang Kong firm role coincide with the World Cup schedule.

"The corporate outing might interfere and is the point. It's really all up to Jenny," said the elder Rosales, adding that her daughter's older sister, Michelle, who now serves as her manager is still finalizing negotiations.

Custodia said that while he considers confidence Rosales will be able to play in the World Cup, he has yet to be informed of the final decision.

"It's one of the things that we'll have to talk about when we don't see training tomorrow," Custodia said.

"If she'll see me, I would really recommend that she plays the World Cup."

Much likely, the club where Custodia grew up in and where he's now one of its coaching professionals, has allowed Rosales free use of the facilities for her training. It also gives her closer access to more training venue since her home is just 20 minutes or less away.

Custodia believes that Rosales has reached about 90 percent of her effectiveness with her new swing.

"It's really more on getting really confident with it, but we're getting there and our continuous training will also help a lot," he said.

Where Rosales played in the Lotus Cup in Singapore two weeks ago, she was able to show better ball striking against third Bombasaw in singles play although she struggled with her short game.

Rosales and her swing teammates beat the the International team, a feat that snatches a 26-year lock of $50,000, her biggest for 2006.

ROSALES: Her coach watches in play

Asiad debacle is water under bridge for Molina

By Jasmine W. Payo

HE MAY BE THE MOST INCorrigible national swimmer in recent years, but Miguel Molina believes he has the potential to do better.

"I would like that male swimmer you broke into pools at 24 or 25, so I haven't wrinkled any pools yet," the US-based bridge-and-freestyler said, in search for anything in Manila.

While on vacation, the 23-year-old tanker could not resist taking a dip in the pool.

"I'm still swimming while I'm here. Still training just to keep in shape," he said.

Just last week though, Molina thought that fitness could be more to life than swimming.

Fourth-place finish

"I took a break last March and only got back in August," he said. "It's not good. I took a break. It made me realize that I wanted to continue swimming. It helped me refocus."

Molina returned to action last December with the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar. And despite four months of training, he only managed a fourth-place finish in the 400-meter individual medley, but that proved to be his ticket to the Philippine swimming contingent.

"I didn't do well as I hoped in Doha," said Molina. "But I'm happy with my performance overall, considering the short training I had."

Strong showing

Molina is preparing for the SEA Games according to Melbourne, Australia, in March and the Japan Open in August. He's also hoping for another strong showing in the Southeast Asian Games in Thailand by the end of the year.

In the 2005 SEA Games, Molina emerged as the team leading individual gold- and silver-medalist and took the team event.

"At the start of the year, I'll be joining several national team competitions in the US," he said. "But what I'm really looking for would be in the World Championships and the SEA Games."

Nl Ancheta Jackie Dungallano, accompanied to join Molina in the World Championships.

Dungallano will be back in the National Team after skipping the Doha Asian Games to focus on her studies in her end.

Harvard arrangement

But the 19-year-old swimmer will first see action in the UE NCAA swimming competition in February, before joining the national squad in March.

"It was in correspondence with Mart and that the coach requested her school in the Ivy League swimming competition, Princeton's Orbis, Brown, confirmed earlier. "We have to do this so Jackie can be released for the 2007 Southeast Asian Games."

Molina is also hoping to finish his international relations studies at the University of California Berkeley.

"I'm graduating in May," said Molina, who will be leaving for the United States on Tuesday.

But there are unlikely issues

reasons to leave the pool.

"I have had a little pool time, how to train and other different aspects," noted Molina. "I also have friends on the Olympic Bid Board to improve on my mental preparation for the races."

PROUD: Molina is still looking for good times

Gonzalez manager says Peñalosa fight in RP 'very risky'

By Sabrina L. Lagumbay
Contributor

THE CAMP OF WORLD BOXING Organization bantamweight champion Jhonny Gonzalez has expressed apprehension over the possibility of defending the title in the Philippines against Gerry Peñalosa during the March 10 WBO Grand Slam of Boxing clash March 10.

In a report posted at the boxing website Fightnews, Gonzalez's manager Oscar de Leon said that a fight between the two warriors is unlikely. He said that when his boxer is the champion, he should not be the one putting anything to fighting in his challenger's hometown.

"Jhonny is the champion and should not have to prove anything by going to the challenger's house," said de la Hoya. "If any of them has to lose their title by bad decisions in the Philippines."

Gonzalez's camp added that they would prefer to stay for a rematch with Israel Vazquez in a showdown with IBF bantamweight king Rafael Marquez.

Gonzalez had previously had to Vazquez in a thrilling bout that saw both men hit the canvas.

The Gonzalez-Peñalosa bout is one of the dates would title matchups facing planned for the WBO Cup, which will be co-promoted by Oscar De la Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions and the ALA-WBO group of Tony Aldegue and Sammy Gellis.

The two other match-ups will pit ABBA super-bantamweight champion Bruce de Leon against Ray "Rowdy Boots" Sandrick and WBO super-fly champ Armando Montiel versus J. Santos.

Peñalosa is slated to fly to Japan next month to be arraigned by shoplifting charges. Michael Buffer is also set to be in Los Angeles right after the fight.

SPORTSWATCH

Guevara golf this Friday at Wack Wack

Fisherama features amateur fighters

BEST basketball classes start Jan. 6

First derby of 2007 at Religon today

Overseas training for triathlon standouts

ELITE TRIATHLETES WILL COMPETE AND train abroad as the Philippines seeks podium finishes in triathlon and duathlon events of the 2007 Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

Triathlon, which saw national champion Pinoy Hernandez emerge as team champion, and squatchlon will also have their own share of the spotlight — competition at the schedule of events, said Triathlon Association of the Philippines (Tricap) president Tom Carrasco.

Carrasco told a recent planning session with Tricap officials that the event will still be on nationwide subject soon as they would "develop triathlon," said Carrasco.

CARRASCO

The Tricap head also announced the appointment of Rafe Reyes and former national champion Andre Leon as Palisade handlers of the junior triathlon program.

He added that a junior training camp in Subic will be held in July. The camp will be supported by the International Triathlon Union, the Asian Triathlon Confederation and Triathlon Confederation of Japan in Beijing.

The schedule of races this year will be highlighted by the National Triathlon Championship on Feb. 18 at the Lakeshore in Filinvest, Paranaque, the Subic International Triathlon on May 5-6, the OZ Long Distance Triathlon, also in Subic in July and the nationwide Speedo National Age Group Triathlon (NAGT) series.

The NAGT series will have legs in Cebu on March, Davao, Bataan, Cagayan de Oro, Los Baños, Tarlac, Lakeshore in Paranaque, and in Bohol following Thanksgiving.

Reyes has also been tasked to assist ITU Sports Development director Lalo Bautista and other international coaches in conducting open Level 1 coaches accreditation seminar, the second for Asian coaches, also in Subic in July.

Final elims for chess players bound for US, Asia meets up

THE SECOND AND LAST ELIMINATION tournament for members of the Mike Cheekiong team bound for competitions in the United States and Asia kicks off at 10:30 a.m. today, courtesy of the St. Francis Square behind EDSA Greenhills in Mandaluyong City.

Open to all members of the Mike Cheekiong chess who took up at least two classes last year, the energetic, fun will be limited only to the first 100 players. Awards: 13 medals (Grandee and juniors 15-17 years old).

The winners in each group will advance to the finals and will play in a round-robin format along with the previous year champions and the top 10 players in the 2006 Mike Cheekiong Chess Championship.

Champions will be back to the finals and Dawn after skipping the Qatar Asian Games to focus on her studies in her end.

BEAUTIES ON ICE: Leslie Pua-Chng (front) with coaches after court, after her valentine as Ice Princess at the EDSA Hall of Fame recently. Judges found the crystal of the Coalition to Choice to during form, talent and personality. The 18-year-old Pua-Chng scored the runner-up Tennessee Belle of Liz Price, and placed Rose Bella-BV Ballesteros and Mel others.

NBA ROUNDUP

Suns nip Pistons as Nash fires 35

PHOENIX (AP) — STEVE NASH HAD 35 POINTS AND 12 assists and Amare Stoudemire added a season-high 31 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Phoenix Suns to a 104-101 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Monday.

Nash took advantage of point guard Chauncey Billups' absence to help hand Detroit its third straight loss. Billups is expected to miss two weeks after straining a calf muscle at the end of his 46-minute performance Saturday.

After the Pistons missed a 3-point attempt in the closing seconds, Nash hit consecutive jumpers to put Phoenix back ahead, 99-98, with 40 seconds to go.

The Pistons got within 101-99 on Carlos Delfino's layup with 2:39 left, but he missed a potential go-ahead 3-pointer on the next possession, and Nash's three-point play put the game away.

Rasheed Wallace scored 22 points for Detroit and Flip Murray, getting more minutes in place of Billups, set season highs of 28 points and seven assists.

Spurs 95, Hawks 81

At San Antonio, Tony Parker scored 27 points and Tim Duncan added 17 despite playing only 26 minutes for the Spurs, who have won 20 of their last 23 games and 14 of 15 at home.

Clippers 98, Knicks 80

At Los Angeles, Elton Brand scored 22 points and tied his season high with eight blocked shots, to lead Los Angeles.

Chris Kaman had 13 rebounds for the Clippers, who have won four of their last five games following a six-game losing streak. The victory was their fourth straight over New York and eighth in the last 11 meetings.

Eddy Curry had 15 points for the Knicks, who are 0-8 against the Clippers in Staples Center.

Rookie guard Marcus Williams returned to the Celtics' lineup after serving a six-game suspension and scored 11 points in 22 minutes. It was Celtics' dagreat Bird against Denver's J.R. Smith that triggered a brawl at Madison Square Garden Dec. 16.

SuperSonics 101, Celtics 95

In Seattle, Chris Wilcox scored a season-high 24 points, and Damien Wilkins added 20 for the SuperSonics.

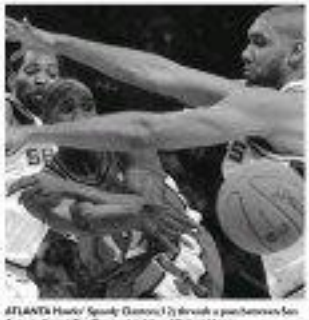
Ray Allen, Seattle's leading scorer, was 7-of-20 from the floor for just 15 points after hitting a season-low 14 Monday night for seven 3-pointers. Tony Allen had 23 points for the Celtics in their sixth straight loss.

Mavericks 89, Nuggets 85

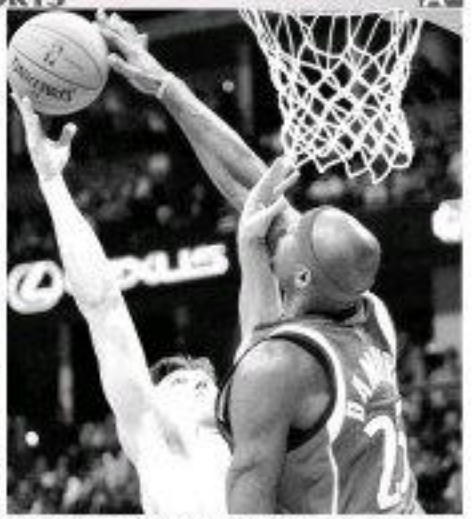
At Denver, Josh Howard had 26 points and 17 rebounds, and Jason Terry added 26 points as Dallas beat Denver for the fifth straight time.

Dallas played without Dirk Nowitzki, who has the virus infection.

Allen Iverson had 28 points and eight assists for Denver, and Earl Boykins added 20 points. Carmelo Anthony had 12 points and 12 rebounds in his first game back after missing four games because of a bruised right thigh.



ATLANTA Hawks' Speedy Claxton (12) shreds a pass between San Antonio Spurs' Tim Duncan (right) and Robert Horry. AP



QUICK Dumper of Dallas Mavs is shot by Denver's Eduardo Najera in their NBA game Monday. AP/WIDE

3 Australian wild cards up

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA — DAVIS Cup titlist Marcos Baghdatis of France beat Frederico Jose Isaias Alvarenga, 6-0, 6-3, 6-4, Monday in a match between two former champions at the Australian men's hardcourt championship, which is experimenting with a four-round rather than three-round format.

Petra Kvitova upset fifth-seeded Dominika Cibulkova, 6-3, 6-4, in one of three wins by unseeded Wimbledon champs.

Chris Guccione fired 10 aces in a 7-5, 6-3 win over Germany's Benjamin Becker and then beat Czech player Jan Hajek, 6-3, 6-2.

Another former Adelaide champion, former No. 1-ranked Lleyton Hewitt, made a return from injury in a 6-4 loss to Alejandro Falla of Colombia. He and fellow Australian Brad Rindler were down in straight sets to Czech pair Lukas Dlouhy and Pavel Vizner.

Several stars let singles competitors on Tuesday against Serbia's Janko Tipsarevic, Paris-seeded Radek Stepanek takes on Finnish Spoiler and second-seeded Gaston Gaudio plays Florian Mayer in other Tuesday matches, while Belgo Dutch hometown Tim Henman in his second round-robin match.

The 32-player Adelaide International is the first event the ATP Tour's post-Australian Open in 2007.

A dozen of the tournament's are players set to compete with the Federer during the season.

"For the players coming off their end-of-season breaks, the first month looks to always be tough," said tournament director Peter Johnston. "After they know that they'll be in control of their first matches during the round-building period to the Australian Open." AP

Spaniards shut out Croatians

PERTH, AUSTRALIA — A CLASSY performance from Fernando Verdasco provided the Spaniards in Spain with its opening tie against Croatia in the United States Hopman Cup here Monday.

Verdasco, a past winner of the event in 2005 with Anabel Medina Garrigues, put his high-flying single club with fellow top 10 player Elena Dan in three sets to score victory in the second singles.

Earlier, Anabel Medina Garrigues beat green Spain the lead in the tie and 6-3 win straight sets win over Ancic's former fiancee.

In the doubles match-clinch rubber, the Spanish pair completed a dream sweep of the tie with a 6-4 6-2 win.

Victory for the three other singles teams all clock hours on the first two days of the tournament, the win puts the Spanish in an ideal position to claim their third Hopman Cup title.

Much was expected of the men's singles duels, with Roberto and Ancic the two highest-ranked men in the event, and the match didn't disappoint.

Roberto is ranked seventh in the world and has a big serve, and the quality of tennis reflected their lofty status in the game as they came 2007.

The taller Ancic looked in control when he clinched the first set, but Roberto broke back during one of the opening exploitative points by the end of the match he he won 7-6, 7-5, 6-3 in two hours and four minutes.

Roberto broke Ancic in the 12th game of the second set to level the match and then one more break in the last set was enough to secure victory.

The Spaniards possible place in the last two sets were manipulated by finished the match with 37 winners to Ancic's 18. AP

Lions shock Cowboys; KC chiefs gain playoffs

IRVING, TEXAS — THE DALLAS Cowboys lost for the first time in four games on Sunday, falling 20-13 to the Detroit Lions to head to the National Football League playoffs as the top wild-card team but with their first two-game losing streak of the season.

Jon Kitna caught a pair of touchdown passes, Kevin Jones and Mike Williams each caught one and Jason Hanson kicked four field goals, helping Detroit to its third win of the year and its most points of the season. A loss by Detroit would have awarded the Cowboys first choice in next year's college draft. Dallas will open the playoffs at home next weekend.

Packers 26, Bears 7

At Chicago, Brett Favre showed he still has some passing left in that gunslinging right arm, passing for 205 yards for Green Bay (6-8).

The 37-year-old Favre was 19-of-30 with no interceptions in what he said could be his finale.

"If this is my last game, I want to remember it," Favre said. He went on talking and I was drowning him out. It's tough. I love these guys. I love this game. After a great year to go out against a great bear ball team I couldn't ask for a better way to go out."

Favre said he would discuss retirement with his family and make his announcement soon — "probably within the next couple of weeks."

Jets 21, Raiders 3

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Chad Pennington threw a touchdown pass to Chris Baker. Leon Washington ran for a touchdown, and Mike Nugent kicked three field goals for the Jets, who improved their a 4-12 season but yet to make the playoffs.

New York (3-13) never trailed and took control in the second half. The Jets will play next weekend in New England in a first-round matchup against the AFC's No. 1 seed. The Raiders finished with the worst record in the NFL, 2-14, tied for eighteen the first overall selection in April's draft.

Chiefs 35, Jaguars 30

In Kansas City, Missouri, the Chiefs clinched into the playoffs as Larry Johnson rushed for 130 yards on 30 carries, giving him an NFL-record 416 carries this season. His 1,750 yards broke the team record of 1,759 yards set by Christian Okoye. Johnson scored four touchdowns.

The Chiefs (9-7) will play at Indianapolis next weekend. After losses Sunday by Cincinnati and Tennessee, the Chiefs snatched the playoffs with a victory by the 49ers over Denver. AP

CHEERTHON Sonja Jones hits a shot to Anabel Medina Garrigues of Spain in their Hopman Cup duel. AP

Myskina may miss Open

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND — Anastasia Myskina is a doubtful starter for the Australian Open because of wrist injury which sidelined her last year. But the 10-th-2006 AIB National's former Classic Member.

Myskina pulled out of Hobart to spend 'comfortable weekend' level event during her 6-1, 7-5, 7-63, 6-2 first-round loss of Argentina's Gisela Dulko.

"I realized during the match that I was not fit enough for the Australian Open," the 2004 French Open and world No. 2-ranked player said. "I still feel pain there, and it bothers me. Maybe I'm going to take a longer break."

The loss to Dulko says 28-goal, 'Russia's first casualty since October. The 23-year-old eight-hander, the first Russian woman to win a Grand Slam title, is expected to decide within days whether she will play in the event.

ANASTASIA MYSKINA

BRAZIL Gisele do Olivais Ferreira takes the women's race.

Brazilian sweep

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL — BRAZILIAN Franck Caldeira and Josefa de Oliveira Reis won the traditional 20-km Sã Silvestre on Sunday amid driving rainfall with it a record-shattering 1-hour, 2-minute.

It was the first time since foreigners were allowed in the race starting in 1947 that Brazilian runners won both the men's and women's races. But Brazilians had an advantage this year because some top foreign runners decided not to participate.

The 23-year-old Caldeira finished in 61 minutes, 7 seconds, beating Brazil's Gedeão Gomes da Silva by 1 minute, 7 seconds through São Paulo's skyscraper lined avenues and roaring streets. Paulo Sérgio dos Santos of Brazil was third in 63:37.

Caldeira, whose best previous finish was 6th in 2005, pulled ahead with seven kilometers remaining and built on his lead to seal the win, leaving Da Silva and Dos Santos to contend for second and third place.

He said the win was one of the top personal thrills Brazilians should get more international recognition in addition, noting that he skipped last year's time in Brazil to run Sunday's Brazil by 34 seconds. AP

SPORTS

HAN TO WATCH: Ronnie Alcano

Alcano a marked man in Kansai Open

REIGNING WORLD POOL CHAMPION Ronnie Alcano will be the man to watch when he sees action in the tough 17th Kamui-Jr-Ball Open slated Jan. 20 and 21 at the Ship Furniture Hallando Kaffin Osaka, Japan.

The lanky, 24-year old cue artist from Calumba City collides with some of the world's finest players whom he beat to score as the world title in Manila in November.

Apart from the stellar field of foreign holdovers, Alcano will also vie against tough competitors in former WPC champions Efren "Bata" Reyes and Alex Pagulayan, Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Lee Van Corteza, the 2006 SEAgame Championship winner.

"Fenghuolun has given me a good preparation for the Kansai Open. Sometimes allowing pagkalooho ni Cesar kept myself sharp by playing 13 ninety games," said Alcano, the biggest Filipino pool star of 2006.

In his most recent international stint, Alcano reached the quarterfinals of the Premier Ja Dapur Cup in Taipei.

He, who supplanted Pagulayan as WPC champion in 2005, teamed up with Tang Chiang-chun to defeat Takahashi and Hijikata, 13-7, to win the seven Men Crowd Nine Cup Scotch doubles gold-medal match at the serene 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

Alcano reasserted to compete in the seven-to-nine tournament on former world champions Wu Chia-ching and Chen Feng-pang of Taiwan and Ruchihisa Takahashi of Japan, rising Japanese star and world junior runner-up Kazuo Hijikata and South Korean Jeong Young-hwa and Kim Woong-dae.

He, who supplanted Pagulayan in 2005, teamed up with Tang Chiang-chun to defeat Takahashi and Hijikata, 13-7, to win the seven Men Crowd Nine Cup Scotch doubles tournament in Tokyo on Saturday.

The Filipino pool ace of Calbiga and Affray de Luna settled for third place after a 9-1 rout of Koreans Jeong and Kim.

Aside from Kansai Open, top cue artists and European players are also tipped to join the roll of tournament favorites. On site organizers, however, have yet to release the final list of participants.

Alcano will be joined in the tournament that slates $5 million (about P620,000) for the champion by Carlo Biado, a teammate in the Bayer Pennsylvania world of businessman Rory Markoc. Marlon Bernardino, Conni Bucay

Despite rows, football alive and kicking again in 2006

By Cybill P. Tupas, Inquirer Visayas

PHIL. Youngbuckand [left] is denied space by a defender but Ariel Dorcelo gets possession in the JSP Kinard match.

IT WAS A ROLLER-COASTER RIDE FOR PHILIPPINE football in 2006.

Despite the string of controversies that hounded the Philippine Football Federation, 2006 still remembered as the year of the Philippines' resurgence in the Southeast Asian region and of the dawning power of the World Cup among Filipinos.

In a country obsessed with basketball and boxing, World Cup drew sturdy interests for the Philippines from June 9 to July 10.

Thousands converged in sports bars and restaurants and other viewing areas to witness the quadrennial tournament that was marked this year by the brilliance and sureness of matchless reign of Frenchman Zinedine Zidane, widely considered as the best player of his generation.

In a cruel, bizarre finale, five unerring penalty kicks, the last coming from defender Fabio Grosso, sent the Italians into a frenzied victory celebration and capsulize Zidane's career—the 2006 World Player of the Year—behind the 11-pound golden trophy shrill in cameras bridled clouds of white confetti at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin.

Attendance of 60,000

Halfway around the world, in the Pancocbian and Stadium in Bacolod City, a combined attendance of 60,000 watched the Philippines' four matches in the Asean Football Championship Qualifiers in November.

And the Filipino hosters did not disappoint, winning three matches, including a 7-0 drumming of minnows Timor Leste. Before 16,000 fans, the Filipinos clinched a spot in the Asean Championships with a clinical 4-1 hosing of Brunei, a fitting follow up to a tough 1-0 triumph over Cambodia.

Those are the feats who want to change Philippine football," national coach Aris Guido said after the victory against Brunei.

Heroes abound for the Filipinos but none was bigger than Hi-Smith striker Philip Youngbuckand, who emerged as the tournament's top scorer with six goals.

Noteworthy performances

After coming through with noteworthy performances were captain Ali Sotomayor, midfielder Chad Cabangbang and goal-scorer Dominic Emolaga Calgaring.

The 19-year-old Youngbuckand, however, has ruled himself out of the Asean Championships in Thailand, leaving snubs as one on the Filipinos' attacking strength.

The lack of attacking thrit had robbed formerly in the Philippines' campaign in the Asian Challenge Cup in Chittagong, Bangladesh, where the continental 35 worm-ranked team saw action.

ADRIAN CRUZ

Without the Youngbuckand brothers Phil and Javier and Emerwerk, the Philippines managed only two points in three games, tying Afghanistan and India with another 2-1 scoreless draw, dropping a 0-1 decision to Chinese-Taipei in its first match.

Success in the Asean Qualifiers, however, gave the Philippines its best ranking in 32 years.

From its worst-ever rank of 195 in October, the Philippines leap-frogged past Vietnam (172), Cambodia (170) and Brunei (154), ending up at 171 in the year-end rankings of the International Football Federation (FIFA).

The Philippine new ranks wrench among 115 countries in the region.

Dramatically, the National Capital Region proved to be the biggest winner with two national titles and a runner-up finish. The Big City squad, powered by players from Club Guangandeel De La Salle University, topped the National Women's Open Championship at the expense of host Oriental Negros, 3-1, in Dumaguete City in August.

Early last month, NCR outlasted Iloilo, 3-1, for the Men's Under-19 Championship held in Zamboanga City. The Metro Manila squad's victory ended Davao's three-year domination of the age-group tournament.

The National Open men's championship was celebrated by powerhouse Negros Occidental, which pulled off one shocker after another in the country's football festival, Iloilo, in whirlwind.

The Negrenses, led by veteran international Peggy Yanoq, Aly Boloy-Go and Jonathan Adam Gaston, campaigners Jovie Pantalon, emanuel Iloilo, 2-0, in thriller Marvey, before topping NCR, 2-1, in the 6-4 match.

An emerging football power in the Visayas, Santa Carlos City hosted the maiden staging of the National Clubs' Under-17 Football Championship in May. Earning the distinction as the first-ever champion was Mandaluyong-Mandaluyong Cty. Oriol, which Cresencio Iloilo, 3-1, in the finals.

Ang Liga champs

Away support Air force, 3-2, in succession to rule the PFF-Ang Liga tournament. The Airmen had defeated the Sampaloc to cop the first division crown of the NCR-PA organized Milo Futsal Tournament.

Iriel FC won the women's division while UAAP ruled the men's second division.

As in many national sport associations, controversies rocked the leadership of the PFF just a few months after hosting the SEA Games, the football body came under fire for failing to attend the roster for the Asian Women's Under-19 Championship set in April.

In February, PFF president Juan Miguel Romualdez survived a vote of no-confidence at a PFF Congress in Iloilo.

Disbursement of funds

The move was allegedly initiated by MOBA president Pichelle Bermudez and Laguna 19, president Arturo Pantilanda Jr., who have been critical of the PFF leadership and the disbursement of funds over the past years.

The two football association leaders pointed to the lack of transparency and professionalism of Romualdez for the stagnant football development, fork favoritism and Pantilanda asked the PFF to open its financial records but were dismissed by Romualdez's men.

The issue stemmed from the PFF's reported failure to submit registration by the Executive and Embassy Consultants on Nov. 2, 2005, three weeks before Romualdez was elected president.

The revocation was discovered only in May and the SCSDN argued that, because of the flaw, nominations could not claim to have met the PFF's deadline.

But the PFF insisted on the limbo in its SEC registration and Romualdez remained in power.

Intramuros senior golfers wrap up series; East Ridge rules finale

CLUB INTRAMUROS OFFICIALLY clinched the overall championship of the scoring wins of the Federation of the Philippine Amateur Senior Golfers at the Pinh Ninh Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong City on Friday.

Intramuros, handicapped by club president Angelito Fernandez, posted par-save loss at Silick Black after earlier scoring the title on the strength of its down leg wins at Club Intramuros in April, Veterans Golf Club in May and the Philippine Navy in September.

East Ridge won at Pinh Black for its second leg victory after earlier winning on its home course.

Manila Golf Club, which also dominated the field at home, was the only other top champion.

Twenty-four golf clubs vied in the tournament staged annually by the Senior Golfers Federation and sponsored by Intership Coffee Plus.

The other participants were Cam. Intramuros, Southwoods, Riviera, Capitol, Orchard, Apolinario Villanueva, Navy, Fernando Air Base, Sta. Filipinas, Forest Hamilton-Lusaya, Diamond, Iloilo, Bagan, Pampa, Agro-Diamond and Alabang.

To be able to play in any of the four tournaments by the federation, which is affiliated with the Asian, Asian and the International Associations of Senior Golfers, one must be a playing member of good standing of a golf club that has its own golf course.

Player handicaps are computed by all golf courses that are affiliated to the network of golf courses all over the world. Individual handicaps are recorded and maintained by the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

MEMBERS of Club Intramuros pose for posterity after clinching the 2006 Federation of the Philippines Amateur Senior Golfers series. Standing [from left] are team manager Tony Morfori, Placido Dela Pena, Pat Cruz, Benny Arcena, Tony Puleg, Ramy Cleto, Rupert Reynoso, Alan Montemayor, Boy Ubak, Joe Arbolado and Jo Bautista. Seated from left are Tony Fernando, Anthony Fernandez and Oso Bautista.

Among the nominees of Club Intramuros, aside from Fernandez, are outgoing Assoc 19-75 champion Rony Garcia, Pete Lopez, Boy Ubak, Rupert Reynoso, Ark Orbeta, scholar Tony Arcenas, Alan Montemayor, team manager Tony Morfori and club vice president Jun Bautista.

BUSINESS

John Raul O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Politicking seen stalling economic rebound

IN THIS ISSUE

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■ **RP tax structure 'not equitable'** /B6

Policy reversals feared in run-up to May polls

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES HAS ENTERED THE NEW YEAR RIDing on a string of good news on the macroeconomic front, but a wild card looms on the horizon—the run-up to the May elections that brings with it risks of policy reversals.

In 2006, business optimism rose as economic growth remained resilient on the back of strong export receipts and inflows from overseas Filipino workers while the government delivered on its promise to reduce its budget deficit, earning better credit ra-

FOLTOCOLS B3

Brittany BEAUTIFUL

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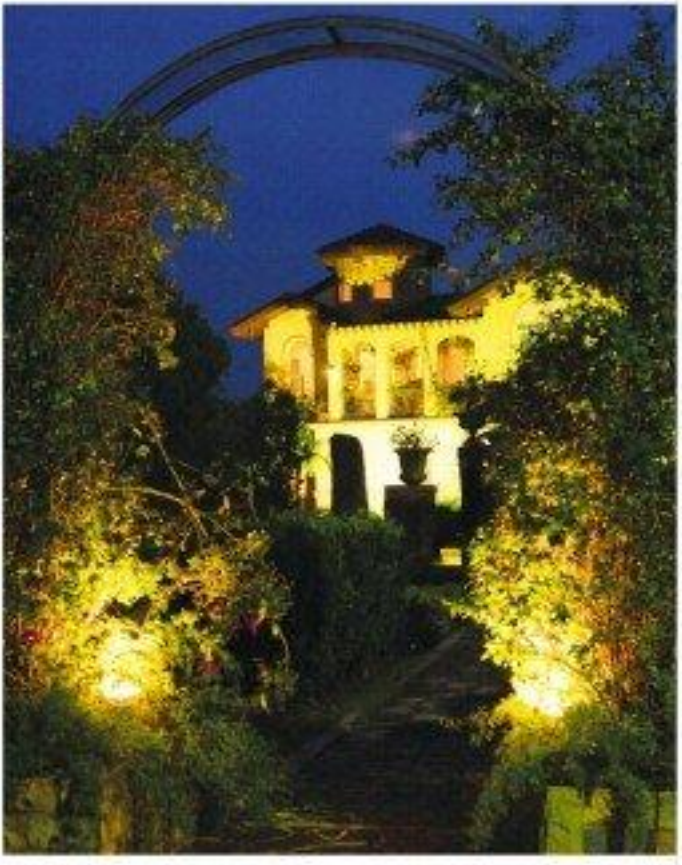
A ROMANCE WITH COURTYARDS...
GLORIOUS WITH THE RISING AND SETTING SUN...

Photos by Jhy Tyamzon



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New Year resolutions for a better economy

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

HAPPY NEW YEAR! THE START OF ANOTHER year is always occasion to hope for a better year ahead. For the Philippine economy, current market sentiments appear to reflect such a hope, notwithstanding a general outlook for uneven global economic growth and persistent negative domestic influences in 2007. While Fed substantially cleared some key uncertainties for the new year business team outlook.

I have explained in recent columns why our 2007 economic performance cannot be expected to be much different from 2006, and could quite likely cast for the worse. Agriculture was the main driver of our growth last year, especially in the first half, but an already crippling 10 billion-spell that could reportedly extend up to August could deny agriculture a lot in 2007. The strongest post-2006 signs to dampen export growth. Key industries in the services sector have begun to show signs of slowing down. And the drop in overall investment since early 2006 will sooner or later manifest in slower output growth.

New leaf

There are, however, certain things that could spell significant improvement in the Philippine economy in 2007, provided that certain preconditions exist and are acted upon and adhered to some needed New Year Resolutions. Here are some that I would personally like to see:

For the President: Lead by example, not by politics. Since the crisis of legitimacy in the latter half of leadership of ex-post facto sign, the quality of economic policy decisions and government appointments have been widely perceived to be compromised by the search for political survival and the perpetuation of power. An often-heard lament within knowledgeable circles is how many of the President's decisions and actions with important implications for the economy appear inconsistent with her 8-point agenda to restructure. The driving need right now is for the opening, by improving aggregate economic data to be translated into widely improving living conditions among Filipinos, especially the poor and hungry.

Tax collection

For the government economic managers: Regain the peak tax and revenue performance attained in 1996-97. Government revenue collection continues to fall short of targets, even with substantial improvement in revenue performance in recent years. Getting the tax effort back to around 17 percent and overall revenue effort to 26 percent of GDP would mean additions to revenues even bigger than what expanding the VAT base attained. This would in turn make it possible to reverse the disturbing consistent decline in the proportion of the national government budget allotted to education and health since 1997.

Real legislation

For members of Congress: Focus on law-making. A number of key legislative measures that would strengthen the economy, unleash much more economic activities and create many more jobs remain pending in Congress. Bills to rationalize fiscal incentives, establish a credit bureau, improve the BOT Law and others are among a number of pending bills that promise to address current and pressing weaknesses of the Philippine economy. I would like to see my senators and congressmen roll up their sleeves and target passing these critical economic measures before they adjourn for the elections, so that their goal for imports may indeed translate to a better economy in 2007.

Full CSR

For the business sector: Give full meaning to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Corporate social responsibility continues to be defined by too many people as merely establishing a philanthropic foundation alongside their businesses and channeling a portion of earnings to charity-type projects through such entities. But CSR in its fullest sense means running one's business in a way that does not exploit its workers but treats them with respect and gives them their due share of the firm's earnings. It means producing one's product or service without damaging one's environment. It means not using one's economic power to the detriment of smaller players. It means giving due respect and assistance to communities hosting one's enterprise and it means paying the proper amount of taxes to the government, without contending or subrepresenting one's true income.

Choosing leaders

And for the rest of us, as we face another election year: Let us choose our leaders responsibly and protect our sacred right to do so. We must not allow attempts to cancel or postpone scheduled elections in May 2007. We must take the effort to know our candidates and make an informed comparison of the choices before us. We must point out who votes we have come them, by taking part in citizens' activities—some of our worst votes are properly and vehemently unwanted for. And most importantly, we must vote for candidates according to their potential for responsible leadership, and not for any other reason. If we fail in these most basic of our democratic responsibilities, then we cannot complain about the people who rule over us, for we always get the leaders we deserve.

A happy and better New Year to all of us—and may it bring us Filipinos new enlightened leaders who will make it so! Comments are welcome at chabito@inbox.net.ph

Market bullish as Megaworld starts ₱11-B stock rights issue

PROPERTY GIANT MEGAWORLD CORP. kicks off today a stock rights offering with analysts remaining bullish following the strong market reaction to Philippine equities for 2007.

Megaworld is offering 4.5-billion 1-P5.00 Series common shares to raise ₱11.1 billion for its expansion. The rights offer ends Jan. 9.

"The investing community as well as local and foreign shareholders are viewing the stock rights favorably in light if the currently prospects of Series," said Megaworld's executive director Kingson Sian.

"We remain overwhelmingly interest in the follow-up of Megaworld stock rights by existing shareholders given the very attractive pricing of ₱1.07 per share, which is a 24-percent discount off Megaworld's closing price of ₱1.40 on Dec. 29, 2006," said Ed Francisco, president of BDO Capital, the financial advisers of the rights issue.

As a result of the stock rights, analysts expect further upside in Megaworld shares.

"The rights offering will substantially boost Megaworld's capitalization, putting it into the league of companies with a market cap of $1 billion," said Gilbert Lopez, senior analyst of Macquarie Research Equities. This will make Megaworld one of the biggest capitalized property players, making it more attractive for large institutional funds to invest in the company.

Megaworld is the market leader in one of the fastest growing segments in the real estate industry, the mid-income residential market and business process outsourcing (BPO) market.

Judy Santiago, head of research for fifth, one of the world's leading investment banks, said in its Dec. 19 report that the funds from the rights issue could help Megaworld enhance its dominant position in both market segments.

The P11-billion proceeds would allow Megaworld to acquire more land to feed up its portfolio, put up additional office and retail space that could raise recurring revenues to 25 percent of total revenue in the next four years, and jumpstart its new Hamilton hotel brand in the Philippines, UBS said.

One out of every three residential condominiums being sold belongs to Megaworld, according to Colliers Jardine. In the office market, meanwhile, Megaworld is currently the biggest BPO office developer in the country's 3 million square meters of office space. It plans to add around 400,000 sq.m. of additional BPO office space over the next five years.

Meanwhile, analyst Alfred Ty of CLSA Asia-Pacific Markets, in a recent report, said: "Megaworld is a major player in the fast growing BPO and SME markets, which should remain hot in the coming years."

Kelly Lim of JP Morgan Asia Pacific Equity Research advises investors to "maintain overweight on Megaworld."

Jollibee merging 3 subsidiaries

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

JOLLIBEE FOODS CORP., THE COUNTRY'S biggest fast food chain, has filed an application with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) seeking approval to merge its three large brands—Chowking, Delifrance and Greenwich.

Chowking, as the surviving entity of the merger, will be renamed Fresh N' Famous Foods, Inc.

Separate sources said the merged company would allow Jollibee's executives and officers to map out strategies for the brands instead of growing tied down with administrative and legal work.

The merger is seen to be revenue neutral or have no impact on revenues, but will contribute to better efficiencies in the group's operations.

Jollibee embarked on a major reorganization of its businesses since 2004 to increase efficiencies and focus on growth.

Sources said there were no plans to list Fresh N' Famous Foods on the stock exchange at this time since the Jollibee Group was not in need of fresh funds for its expansion plans.

Last November, Jollibee announced it would merge Chowking Food Corp., Greenwich Pizza Corp. and Delifrance (Philippines) to list a P2-billion company. The amount represents the combined market-value equity of the three firms. The merger has yet to be approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The emerging entity, Fresh N' Famous Foods, will be the second biggest food service company in the country after Jollibee Foods itself, accounting for 32 percent of group-wide sales, chief financial officer Fernando Bayan had said.

Based on sales in the first half of 2006, Fresh N' Famous Foods would have annualized sales of P12.6 billion, Bayan said, comprising Chowking's P8.9 billion, Greenwich's P3.5 billion and Delifrance's P400 million. These units had a total of 624 stores in the Philippines as of June 2006.

Jollibee aims to become Asia's leading fast food player in 10 years, Bayan said.

From page B1

Politicking . . .

ing prospects. Inflation and interest rates also slowed down and foreign investments picked up while the peso gained sharply.

The single biggest event that had the biggest positive impact on the economy this year was the implementation of the expanded value-added tax law, which ushered the domination in government finances, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said.

Aside from the government approved the settlement of ₱203 million in remaining debts to the International Monetary Fund, paving the way for an early exit from a non-lending monitoring arrangement with the multilateral institution.

Agnes Bernal, executive director for sovereign ratings at Standard & Poor's, said the prospects of the IMF debt exit will not have a material impact on the Philippine government's sovereign ratings, as the amount was but "a drop in the bucket" compared to the $35 billion in public external debt.

"Nonetheless, it is positive, in its signaling effect. It conveys that the country's external finances are on the right track, with dependency on external funds declining," Bernal said.

"I would see this as just one more in a string of positive developments we have seen throughout this year and into it all those developments in combination will have a positive effect on the rating, not the prospects of this debt per se," he added.

A parental economic review by local consultancy Sin Lazaro, Fernando, Tin & Associates authored by Ramon Fernando and Christine Tang stressed that public credit could end up as the economy's basic this new year.

"The macroeconomic numbers have much to look forward to in 2007, especially if global conditions remain benign and planned ventures (such as those approved by the Board of Investments and export processing zones) materialize. However, with 2007 being an election year, the first six months will likely be lost to politics and politicians," the report said.

The report said the greatest risk to sustaining growth would be if the administration wants to abandon sound economic policies or misspending hard-earned money on dubious expenditures just to win votes.

"A highly likely scenario for 2007 would see the economy subject to setbacks to potholes. The period through mid-year would see investors sidelined, observing the turn of events from the elections," it said.

But the report noted that despite politics, economic growth would proceed on the momentum obtained from consumer-fueled consumer spending.

"Should election results reinforce the election of political and policy stability going forward, the second half of 2007 may see the economy back in the driver's seat. Should outstanding issues remain unresolved after the elections, the economy could be expected to continue to muddle along over the medium term," it said.

"With macroeconomic conditions stabilizing and the external environment relatively calm, the report said the next big challenge would be to transform the improved business conditions into real investments, starting with sectors long supposed to jumpstart a fresh wave of capital accumulation—power, mining, build-operate-transfer infrastructure projects.

At the same, a deterioration in order to restore domestic to doing business is required to attract the billions more of investments needed to sustain higher growth and create jobs for the growing labor force. To this end, opening the Subic Special (1) Bailey for operators would be a good starting point," the report said.

Development Bank of Singapore, in a recent commentary, said investors should benefit from administration's government spending as core reforms improve.

BOI says registered projects in 2006 increased 16% to ₱190.66B

PROJECTS REGISTERED WITH THE Board of Investments reached P190.66 billion in 2006, or 16 percent higher than the P163.28 billion listed in 2005.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez, who is the BOI managing head, said the total amount of investments approved by the agency was higher than the 13-percent target growth of P168 billion.

"2006 was a good year for BOI," Hernandez said. "We are optimistic that this can be further sustained through 2007."

Hernandez said the better than expected numbers were a result of the government's much improved fiscal position, and the improved business environment as well.

"Investment rates were also reduced while the economy's credit rating was upgraded," he said. "All of these helped in attracting more investments."

Some of the largest projects listed with the BOI last year were: 1.) Meralco Ltd.'s P43.3-billion coal-fired power project; 2.) Smart Communications' P15.5-billion 3G cellular phone system, as well as Globe Telecom's P5.3-billion project.

To improve the country's attractiveness as an investment destination, the Department of Trade and Industry-Export Development Council has lined up programs that mainly focus on attracting mid-tier and small investors to financing.

The council has organized six working groups screening previously identified areas of concern that include but are not limited to, efficient public and private sector management, effective access to financing, improved transaction flows and costs (minimizing red tape), seamless infrastructure networks, and energy cost competitiveness and self sufficiency.

Other possible areas seen to need NEDC intervention are the issue of addressing Intranational red tape, especially in easing the entry and exit of goods, as well as of business personnel; making considerable the implementation of agreed business rules, institutionalizing dispute analyses on government requirements, and severing economic embargo.

Another area is that of financing.

TIDC expects to build the capacity of micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises through the finance program it hopes to put in place.

Bernard W. Dominguez

In 2007, SMEs will get big boost from Citem projects

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY trade promotion unit has set 22 trade fairs and missions in 2007 to boost business for exporters, especially small- and medium-sized firms that produce and ship out products made of wood materials.

The Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions said it was preparing to explore more opportunities in overseas markets, such as those in the United States, Europe, Japan, China, and the Middle East.

"We want more business activities for our SMEs and to encourage them to try out new markets," said Trade Assistant Secretary Dr. Augusto Santos, who is also the executive director of Citem.

Santos said that for the information technology (IT)-enabled services, Citem would be sending delegations to the following fairs: Software Development Expo & Conference in Japan, Convergence Asia & Singapore, American Health Information Management Association or Annual Convention & Exhibition in the United States, and Asian Games Development Summit in Singapore.

He said Citem was also considering sending a business mission to New York, Washington, and Florida in the United States, as well as to the Beijing Olympics.

For food, health and wellness, Citem plans to organize groups of local firms that will participate in FHI Chicago, Asian Health and Wellness Exhibition, the Annual Food and Beverage Exhibition to be held in Japan, and the Avenga in Germany.

A food mission to Gulf States is also scheduled, which will cover Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

"We want to work closely with all sectors and send business delegations for market research and to build new contacts," he said.

In 2005, Citem-led missions generated P1762 million in export sales and P2763 million in domestic returns for 2,037 SMEs and service firms.

Bernard W. Dominguez

VAT seen to yield ₱89.42B in 2007

MERCHANTS OF BACLARAN
Baclaran's market scene is both colorful and chaotic. It continues to draw thousands in its eurekahacks aside (Most with untold scenes that may be bad for a song. MIKE JACINTO

Expected revenue is 19% higher than ₱75B in '06

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT in 2007 hopes to collect P89.42 billion in additional revenue from the continued implementation of the Value-Added Tax Law.

The amount represents a 19-percent increase from the 2006 collection target of P75 billion.

The VAT law, considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda, basically expanded the coverage of the VAT to include previously exempted services and products, such as oil and electricity among others.

The law likewise raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent, and the corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent.

Of the targeted revenue for 2007, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) has been assigned to collect P65.75 billion, while the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) will account for P23.67 billion.

The BIR collects VAT from domestically produced goods and rendered services, while the BOC charges the tax on imported merchandise.

The government believes that the realization of the promised revenues for the first few months will be the country response in creating a image before the international financial community, and could even bring about a credit rating upgrade.

For 2006, the Department of Finance is confident that the government will hit its P75-billion revenue collection target out of the implementation of the VAT law.

The DOF earlier reported that the government generated a total of P61.7 billion in additional revenue from January to October, 2006 – surpassing the 10-month target of P60.2 billion.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the VAT collection in the first 10 months of 2006 kept the government on track of its full-year target of P75 billion.

Missed a third of the revenue collection from this tax measure is allocated to needed social services in social services and infrastructure," Teves said.

Under the VAT law, the government must allocate 20 percent of the proceeds of the tax measure collected in 2006 to infrastructure development and improvement of basic services.

Finance undersecretary said that the VAT law, which had a tough time sailing through Congress due to opposition from militant and consumer groups, is expected to help the government achieve its goal for generating a zero budget deficit by 2008.

The law took effect in November 2005, initially implementing the expansion of the coverage of the original VAT and the hike in the corporate income tax rate.

The hike in the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent took effect in February this year.

The budget deficit is expected to reach between P60 billion and P90 billion this year. In 2007, it is projected to reach P63 billion. If all goes well, the deficit will be completely wiped out by 2008.

Telecom firm to undergo rehabilitation

THE PETITION OF LIBERTY TELECOM HOLDings Inc. for corporate rehabilitation has been approved by a rehabilitation court, the company said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Liberty was incorporated in January 1994, to engage in real and personal property businesses and to offer voice and data communications through subsidiary Liberty Broadcasting Network Inc.

Saying corporate necessary liens. Chavez said the company would submit the "unqualified report" of the independent auditor on the company's 2006 financial statement in order to comply with the Bourse's requirements on delisting.

Liberty Telecom is the challenger that the Securities would suspend trading of a listed firm that files for rehabilitation. The suspension will last until after the court approves a rehabilitation plan and the company submits a comprehensive corporate disclosure on the effects of the program on the firm's capital structure. Elmer T. Ochinabon

What a year that was!

THE YEAR THAT ENDED YESTERDAY will be remembered as one of the more remarkable in our history.

Sure the mobile intrusion industry was rocked by the offer of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) to be the sole provider of Compulsory Third Party Liability (CTPL) insurance, but this was a small side show to the political circus.

After her election in 2004, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was accused of wholesale cheating, earning doubts on her legitimacy. This led to an unsuccessful attempt at the House of Representatives to impeach her.

Finally, in February 2006, the opposition went to the streets in the Edsa-Cha! the demonstrations would ultimately lead to people-Power 2.

At the Edsa Shrine, a huge throng (mostly leftist, judging from the red flags) massed in Makati. Others marched down Ayala Avenue. There were contingents of Erap diehards, rabble rousers of a TV evangelist, and Sen. Ping Lacson's supporters. Early group, overall, is ultimately colourful. It was a very colorful show.

After just a week or so, the division

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES
Florencio C. Gerilero!

emerging in Ayala Avenue fizzled out when the employees in the business district stuck to their desks, and the rest down in the surrounding upscale subdivisions stayed home watching the TV coverage. Paying the demonstrators at the rate of P100 a day per head could not be kept up for long.

But Malacañang's mismanagers will be credited for years to come and should provide a manual for inspiring a rebellion: Cancun (the Sequel).

At the Edsa shrine, the police broke up the crowd with truncheons. Some well-known personalities who are always around during these demonstrations were rounded up, but later released.

Ayala Avenue crowd moved to Ayala Avenue. The police blocked the crowd in Mandaluyong.

Obviously, the tactic was to prevent the crowds from growing big, merely to resist was to dispute the clouds by sundown.

Then, the final countermove. At Mendiola Bridge, the feared Unidentified Political Uniformed," was found down with a water cannon. Police and the army stood behind the participants of the demonstration (the so-called Edsa crowd) in the demonstrations.

A contingent of marines and rangers was supposed to provide the military component to the coup. But these forces gave hope in their ranks.

After the failed coup attempt, the opposition tried again to impeach the President. She was accused of rigging the election by planting election commissioners-Santiago.

This led to the apology in a move never done before by a sitting president. GMA admitted to planting Garcillano. And, GMA told the nation how sorry she was.

Garcillano, who had been in hiding, suddenly showed up and testified in the House Impeachment. He was politically the opposition. In the end, nothing came out of it. And the impeachment rep again failed.

To round up the year, the Filipino people were treated to the Cha-cha spectacle, the attempt by the Senate, led by Senator Dr. Nereida, to change the form of government from a bicameral to a unicameral. The Senate, for the first time, which the President supports. (I have a very strong feeling that GMA supporter Cha-cha so that the House would not impeach her.)

The House wanted to convene Congress as a Constituent Assembly (ConAss) with both the House and the Senate voting as one. This was the House could muscle the Senate in the voting.

Because the Con-Ass has been unsuccessfully defeated. The Mara 2006" elections are fast approaching and every congressmen wants to start campaigning. Happy days are here again!

By year end, the President has weathered all the typhoons that rocked around her. She has consolidated all the political forces to her center and script. She is friendly in control.

Happy new year all!

DTI heads off business registration rush

By Bernard W. Dominguez

THE TRADE DEPARTMENT'S National Capital Region office announced that it would be beefing up its off-site facilities for the January rush in business registration to avoid overcrowding in its Makati headquarters.

Trade Assistant Secretary Angel U. Peluyo said January was considered the peak season of business name registration because many ex-taxpayers believed it would be good luck to establish a business at the start of the year.

"This coincides with the schedule of the renewal of business permits in local government units," Peluyo said. "That is why we carefully studied this situation and implemented measures that we opened under the modern more responsive and efficient."

She urged business owners to consider other means in filing business name applications such as the DTI-NCR satellite offices spread across the metropolis.

The satellite offices, mostly located in city halls, accept business name application based on their schedule.

Ground floor of the Manila City Hall (Mondays and Wednesdays, 8 a.m. until noon); ground floor of the Las Piñas Business One Stop Shop Center (Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 8 a.m. up to 5 p.m.); ground floor of the Quezon City Hall Complex (Wednesdays, 8 a.m. up to 5 p.m.); second floor of the Marikina City Hall (Thursdays, 8 a.m. up to noon); second floor of the Cooling Tower (Monday to Thursday, 8 a.m. up to 5 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m. up to noon); and third floor of the Valenzuela Convention Center (Mondays to Friday, 8 a.m. up to 5 p.m.).

Peluyo said business owners can also go to the Business Service Centers located at the SM shopping mall in Las Piñas, the North Edsa mall in Quezon City, Megamall in Ortigas, Mall of Asia in Pasay, as well as other SM malls in Sta. Mesa, Fairview, Manila, Sucat, Novaliches, San Lazaro, and Makati.

A third option is to avail of the DTI National Capital Region's new express or service, made possible through a partnership with the 21.

Business owners can call up Air 21 customer service representatives through its call center dedicated to processing name applications at 455-8424.

Upon confirmation of the availment of service, an Air 21 authorized representative will pick up the application forms, required documents and business name clearance in Makati City, within 24 hours upon receipt of the forms.

Air 21 will thereafter deliver the approved business name application, together with the DTI-issued official receipts to the applicants within 24 hours upon receipt of these documents at the DTI.

Peluyo also advised business owners to request online or download Business Name Registration forms by logging in to www.dti.gov.ph.

Another way to gain information on Business Name requirements and procedures is through SMS.

Text DTINCR to 2948 for Globe and Sun subscribers, and 3949 for Smart users.

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RP tax structure 'not equitable'

Study says country's tax laws least progressive in SE Asia

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE PHILIPPINES' INCOME TAX STRUCTURE is one of the least equitable in Southeast Asia, according to a study made by the National Tax Research Center (NTRC).

The NTRC said that if the country's individual income tax structure were to be compared with that of its neighbors, the Philippine structure was not as progressive, and therefore one of the least equitable.

Progressivity in income taxation is manifested by an increase in the amount of income tax one has to pay as his or her income rises. Progressivity is often the goal of governments in designing the structure of its tax rates. This is normally deemed a measure of equity in taxation.

"Measuring the level of progressivity of a tax system, therefore, is important because this will eventually indicate how well the system redistributes the wealth among the population," the NTRC said in its study.

NTRC is an attached agency of the Department of Finance tasked with conducting tax-related studies.

Under the Philippines' National Internal Revenue Code, the government imposes the following income tax rates for individual taxpayers: 5 percent for those earning P10,000 and below a year; 10 percent plus P500 for those earning between P10,000 and P50,000; 15 percent plus P2,500 for those earning between P50,000 and P100,000; 20 percent plus P7,500 for those earning between P100,000 and P500,000; 25 percent plus P125,000 for those earning between P500,000 and P2,000,000; 30 percent plus P575,000 for those earning between P2,000,000 and P5,000,000; and 32 percent plus P1,375,000 for those earning P5,000,000 and above.

ATRC said that of the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Indonesia has the most progressive income tax structure.

The country with the lowest progressivity in terms of income tax structure is Malaysia. The Philippines finds second to Malaysia.

The NTRC said measuring progressivity in taxation takes into account two factors, averaging (movement in the tax rate), and the widening of the income interval for each successive income bracket.

Compared with the seven income brackets observed in the income tax structure in the Philippines, Indonesia's income tax structure only has five brackets.

Indonesia's tax structure is as follows: a 5-percent income tax rate for those earning 25 million rupiah and below; 10 percent plus 1.25 million rupiah for those earning between 25 million and 50 million rupiah; 15-percent plus 3.75 million rupiah for those earning between 50 million and 100 million rupiah; 25 percent plus 13.25 million rupiah for those earning between 100 million and 200 million rupiah; and 30 percent plus 36.25 million rupiah for those earning at least 200 million rupiah.

The Arroyo administration is pushing for a bill that will reorganize the country's individual income tax structure. The simplified net income tax bill is currently pending in Congress.

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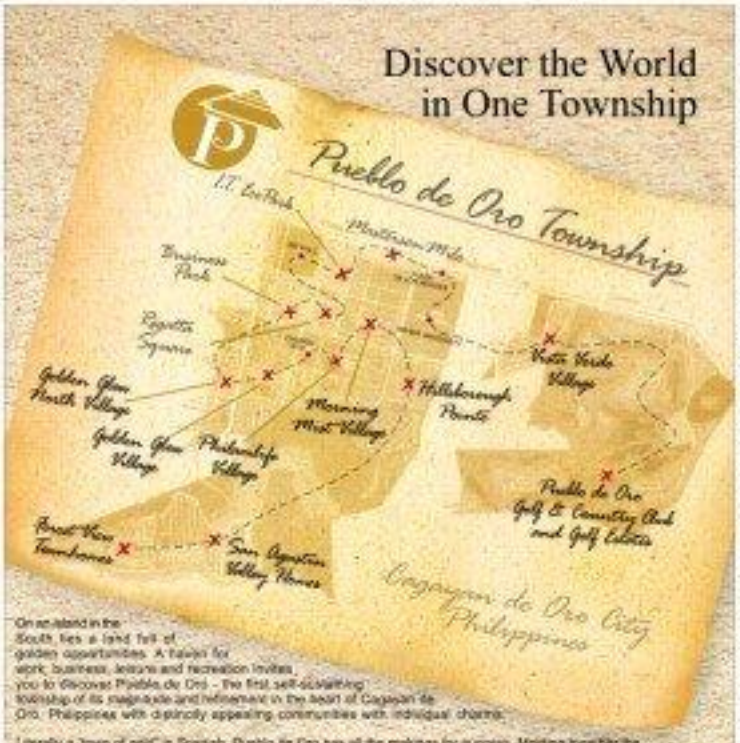

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MWSS turns to rehab court to complete Maynilad deal

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS AND Sewerage System has decided to turn to the rehabilitation court in its effort to prevent the three creditors of Maynilad Water Services Inc. from blocking the entry of a new major shareholder that will take over the west water concession.

The MWSS, as represented by the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel under Justice Agnes Devanadera, has requested the rehabilitation court to declare that the three creditors have forfeited their rights when they failed to submit their written consent within a prescribed period.

The creditors—Deutsche Bank, Societe Generale and Credit Suisse First Boston (formerly Credit Suisse)—were supposed to submit their consent to the transfer of the government's stake in Maynilad to the new shareholder.

"On account of the unreasonable failure of the lenders ... to provide consent to assign MWSS' rights and obligations on [the] personal equity in Maynilad to the winning bidder, the creditors-lenders are deemed to have waived their right to exercise their Clause 24 Consent, and the DCBA (debt and capital restructuring agreement) is deemed completely complied with," the MWSS said in a motion it filed before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court branch 93.

The MWSS also pointed out that during negotiations, the lenders had unreasonably withheld their consent because "they wanted to be guaranteed of the other creditors."

Itoki, which holds a 16-percent stake in Maynilad, is also considered a leader for shredding grid for its 312B-capacity performance bond that was granted with the government.

In the motion, Devanadera also urged the rehabilitation court under Judge Reynaldo B. Daway to heed the recommendation of the designated state receiver Renato Bernardo that the French shareholder Suez could no longer exercise its voting rights as "delineated in the company by-laws of Maynilad.

"The company by-laws ... are no longer applicable upon completion and approval of the debt and capital restructuring agreement," the DOJC stated in its position.

Devanadera said that the government could [illegible] in its executive position if it would not complete the process. If the consent were to be delayed, it could force the winning bidder to withdraw its offer, and result in the failure of privatization.

The DMCI-MPIC Water Company was the lone consortium that submitted a qualified winning bid for the remaining years of the 25-year concession.

The new concessionaire will be assuming Maynilad's obligations under a debt and capital restructuring agreement with the MWSS.

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LIFESTYLE

Like Chair Sarol-Formoso

WELL AND GOOD
Tina Juan

The sound of fitness

HAVE YOU CAUGHT YOURSELF humming a song you heard as a party the night before or unconsciously tapping your foot to music on the radio even if you aren't really listening?

Music definitely has a way of getting under our skin. Scientists believe this is because we all have an inner rhythm that responds automatically to the beat of the music we hear.

The first sound a fetus "hears" is the mother's heartbeat and breathing patterns. We learn to move in sync with our environment through a sort of "neurological entrainment" that links our external nervous system to external rhythms.

There is a saying among group exercise instructors that "music is the master," meaning it controls the motivation, speed and intensity of the class.

If the music is uplifting, invigorating and catchy, students will be inspired and motivated. If it drags, no matter how skilled the instructor, the class will be affected.

Science is affirming these observations with experiments on how music positively or negatively influences our workouts, whether exercise classes, lifting weights, running or walking.

Right tune

If you want to make the most of your exercise time, choose the right kind of music for your workout. Slow, relaxing music is excellent for stretching and related body formats like yoga. Pilates and tai chi but not for strength training.

A study that compared stimulating music, sedate music and silence while measuring grip strength found that slow music had a weakening effect. Participants were stronger when they listened to energetic music or no music at all.

However, not all kinds of vigorous music will work in your favor either: you can pumping iron, heavy metal music with its syncopated beat—a disruptive rhythm with extreme swings—can throw off your movement and mess up your body.

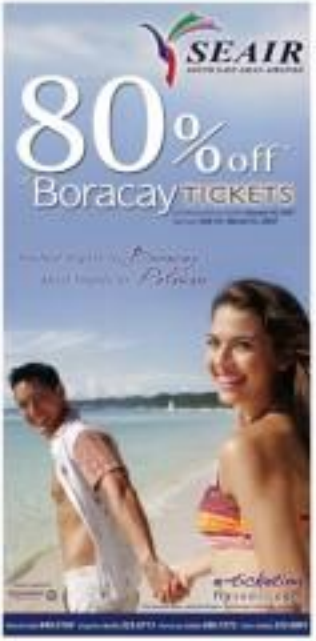
The best music for weightlifting seems to be dramatic music with even, rhythmical phrases and steady beat.

This is also true for aerobic exercise. In an experiment done with college students who requested performance for hard rock, it was either rock music that made them work out longer on a treadmill and feel better about the workout afterward.

Longer workout

Music can relieve the mental stress and boredom of long endurance workouts. Research participants who listened to music as they pedaled on stationary bikes worked out 27 percent longer compared to when they did it in silence. This is why many people use

THE BOMBER /C7



Request niyo:

"Sa abroad man si love, gusto ko parang nasa tabi ko lang siya."

Sagot namin:

Globe Tipid IDD

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Promo runs from Dec. 22, 2006 to Jan. 4, 2007. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. SEM, series of 2006.

BUSINESS tycoon Butch Campos, Evelyn Porter and Valentino Wily

COSTA Cruises SPA chair Pier Luigi Foschi and Hong Kong's Victor Fung

INTERNATIONAL businessman Basil Chan with Dr Rissa Vistanes Tan

The Orient cruise ship

HOMEtown Hong's mega socialite Bonnie Gokson (standing), who hopefully organized the weekend cruise, with Nina Lopez and Lopez Cebu Campos, Kim Arcena and husband Lim Camacho and CC Chen

THE COSTA Allegra, while maintaining its European flair, is tailored to cater to Chinese vacationers from Hong Kong and mainland China.

IN THE JACUZZI on board the Costa Allegra: Alessandra Perez Rubio, Carmen Delgado, Matthew and Zachary Huddlee

MGR. Felix Alcaraz, Victor's Anton San Diego and Audrey Chia

THE ELEGANT COSTA ALLEGRA brings the glamour of traveling on a cruise ship to the ocean challenge.

Owned and operated by Costa Cruises SPA, definitely one of the world's leading cruise companies, Costa Allegra was welcomed to Hong Kong like a grand celebrity.

She was all set for her maiden voyage to sizzling Shanghai, to the first international cruise line to operate in China, Costa Cruises 2006, nine-silvered, limited tons of guests for a spirited, five-cruise.

We arrived in Hong Kong together with Philippine Tatler editor in chief Antoni San Diego and Hiroshima-southern lady Kim Arcena-Camacho, hostess at Credit Suisse.

After Line C arrived from Singapore, we proceeded to board the ship docked at Ocean Kong's Ocean Terminal.

The elegant Costa Allegra, which entered into service in 1992, is a 28,500-ton cruise ship that can carry 1,000 passengers. It has 484 comfortable cabins.

The ship was renovated and specifically tailored to cater to Chinese vacationers from Hong Kong and mainland China while maintaining its European flair.

Neoclassic

After the remodeling, Costa Allegra now has a new eye-catching Italian neoclassic look particularly appreciated by Chinese, Japanese and Korean diners.

Joining the cruise from Hong Kong is Shanghai-born Micky Arison and it's-majority Pier Luigi Foschi, chair and CEO of Costa Cruises SPA, dubbings.

The ship's staff, in many suits, welcomed guests at the top of the red carpet, with flutes of champagne. Other crew members escorted us to our respective cabins.

That night, 300 of Hong Kong's business society and business personalities, talents and international personalities were invited aboard for an elegant sit-down dinner at the ship's restaurant on Deck 6, upon cocktails.

The superbly prepared six-course Italian dinner lasted till 11:00 p.m., when Hong Kong guests, not joining the cruise disembarked. Some of us decided to check out some of Hong Kong's hottest night spots.

Last-minute shopper

Next morning, breakfast was at the Jade Club at Deck 7. Antoni S.B. jumped ship and did some last-minute shopping at the supermarket in the ocean terminal for some junk food, which were not sold onboard.

We also welcomed gorgeous jet Audrey Packet Chia and Fellow Alfonsia, who came with some of Hong Kong's young, chic newgrands, headed by Francisca and Kylah Intal-turner Bonnie Gokson and adorable shipping heiress Linda Magsaysay Ho Ho Sliva.

The cruise brought together the cremation of the events from Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea and Thailand.

By the way, Bonnie G., in collaboration with Occasions PR & Marketing Ltd., was the riotous overall unsurpassed planner and per-

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Haaren using Kodak EasyShare

Request niyo:

"Gusto ko ng tipid sa gastos, 'di sa kulitxtan."

Sagot namin:

Globe UNLIMITXT

Text Unlimitxt to 2870 for free info.

NICOLE, Ina and Lee relish their grandkitchen, the well-respected Robert Ho

HEARTFELT GARLIC: Hunches, dad Gaga Medina, Zachary, mother Linda Magsaysay Ho Medina, and Zachary's girlfriend, Carmen Delgado

THE FAB: Najeira clan Dennis, Ira, Monika, Judy, balance magnate Joey and his wife Joji

HOME: King's vivacious interiors Reyna H. with her husband, international barrister Mahesh Hariani, and businessman Bobby Evanco

CARNIVAL: PLC CEO and host Ernie Miclat Arbon

HK high society's woman of substance, Alice Chio

OLD WEALTH society women: Doris Hotte Delgado and Doris Ming Bago

A SYMPHONY orchestra's guests invited to Chey Island Cruise ship.

direct of this really one-of-a-kind happening, dahlings.

It was wonderful to see such greats as Amelia Magsaysay Ho, with her daughters Doris Ho, CEO of the Magsaysay Group of Companies; Helen H. Delgado and Linda B. Medina, director of Palmore Shipping & Management Group and managing director and co-founder of OlgaServ; the Peninsula Manila's adorable Evelyn Lim Bonbon; All City Management chair, brilliant Basil Ong; Jennifer Yujuico and his beautiful family; stone baron Cornelio, managing director of Credit Suisse's investment banking division based in Singapore; financier wife Monica Tuason; Cajuan Walker Kwok and his wife Pamela; Camsteel PLC CEO and board chair Micky Ayson, who is Ho, 94, is father; Manila's Fashion Set club year; hostess and business tycoon Rhoweh Marbella and his glamorous wife Klaudia; girl Reyna Hernandez; ADB-CBN Foundation managing director Gina Lopez; chair of Trust Asia Investment Company and his wife, stateswoman and

ANITA Magsaysay and husband Robert Ho

HONG KONG-BASED young couple businessman Anthony Kwong and his wife, gorgeous Mandy Payot

HELEN Magsaysay Ho Delgado in front of her club Shanghai boutique

cosmic Ollie Malbarosa, plus so many others like them.

Some were de-stressing by doing tai chi, attending a fortune-telling class, shrieking out the charms and enjoying the swinging musical stage shows and other fun and interesting activities, as well as the sumptuous food served in the Oriental ambiance of the Ritz-Carlton.

After three wonderful days, we arrived in Shanghai with a bang! After disembarking, the group dashed to the renowned Mei Long Zhuig Restaurant for lunch hosted by that gentleman of gentlemen, Robert Ho.

Then it was time to shop, which included going to the chic, must-checkout store simply called Corners & Classics. The decent bit of Corners, where you will find the best of the best, it's owned by that lady who always wears exclusive and gorgeous silk qipao a outfit, Helen Ho Delgado.

Extravaganza

The highlight of the trip was the Shanghai extravaganza at the club, which started promptly at 8 p.m. after cocktails, with the skyline of Pudong and the Bund as backdrop. One thousand invited guests from Shanghai and the ship passengers watched and were completely mesmerized with the "Italian cheerleaders" of the open-facade show created by Valerio Sesti, the Italian genius who staged the 2006 Turin Winter Olympics celebration.

After a restful, fun-filled cruise we jetted back to Manila. Ciao, Allegra will be sailing from Shanghai for its regular five-day itinerary, with stopovers in Nagasaki, Japan; and Cheju Island, Korea.

Hong Kong will be her mother port during the winter season, dahlings.

It definitely was an awesome experience, palangan, sailing in some of Asia's most destination Italian-style, no less, on the oh so chic, hellenic Ciao Allegra.

For more info, the ssEC Greatcruise PP & Marketing Ltd. in HK, Look for Carmen Wan or Vivi Lee, tel. 2522 7868; fax 2810 8598; or e-mail grace@ssehk.com or vivi@ssehk.com.

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Promo period until January 15, 2007. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 9952, series of 2006.

COMICRelief

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2007

GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

A. LIPIN — By Eli Abrera

BABY BLUES — By Jerry Scott

PUGAD BABOY — By Pol Jurado

NUTS — By Patrick McDonnell

LOVEBOOTS — By Elizabeth Chichilo

ATOMO AND WEBBY — By Dan Garcelland

DAVAO COMEDY — By Steven Pidalikan

KIKO MACHINE — By Manny Abrera

HEROBOARDS — By Jomar Tejico

TULDOK — By Nani and Tutan Palmaruling

BEN — By Daniel Shelton

DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

		8			5			1
	7			8			6	
3			2			9		
		3			2			6
	1			4			3	
7			5			8		
		6			1			7
	2			3			8	
5			9			3		

Difficulty Level ★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	3	9	6	5	4	7	2	8
6	7	2	8	9	3	5	1	4
4	8	5	7	1	2	9	3	6
2	9	6	4	8	7	3	5	1
8	5	1	2	3	9	4	6	7
3	4	7	5	6	1	2	8	9
5	2	8	9	4	6	1	7	3
7	1	4	3	2	8	6	9	5
9	6	3	1	7	5	8	4	2

Difficulty Level ★

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime T. Licauco

St. Benedict's medal, coincidences, etc.

HERE ARE SOME INTERESTING questions from readers and an e-mail series:

I may have a Catholic and I still consider myself as one, but there are certain doctrines of the Church I cannot reconcile with my beliefs. For one, I believe in the preexistence of souls. The Bible/s do not/s the idea of reincarnation is founded.

In your columns of Dec. 19 you mentioned that a person could protect him/herself from demonic spirits by wearing "a protective object in your body, like the St. Benedict's medal, that's been empowered or blessed in the proper ritual by a Benedictine priest authorized to do so."

Wouldn't that be like asking for the help of a soul who may at present be occupying a worm body and who may himself be in need of help to correct a demonic debt? Sainthood seems to have been bestowed by the Church in accord/ance on the basis of political influence or pressures, just as the papacy was, though St. Benedict might be one of the few exceptions. Just curious.

S.O., MIGARDIA

Thank you for your reaction to my recent column and for your interest in my work. Like you, I struggled with the Catholic teachings I internalized in and my later discoveries about the true nature of reality.

I see no conflict or contradiction. When we are talking about how a saleable bar powerful psychic energy, one can empower an object with certain qualities to protect, heal or guide a person.

The medal of St. Benedict has been empowered by the early Church to protect its wearer against demonic possession, curses, snake poisons and even calamities. He does not have to call on St. Benedict for this.

Japanese researcher Mr. Emoto has proved anyone can also empower/ earth, tap water by sending us prayers/love or for some other purpose.

Synchronicity

Here's a question from Ricky (not his real name):

I would just like to ask your opinion regarding an incident at Landmark, Makati. I was on the fourth floor and I saw our neighbor.

I was not in the mood to strike a conversation, so I decided to avoid him (he did not notice me). I went down to the supermarket. As I was paying at the counter, I once again noticed him standing in front of me. Still I was not in the mood to talk. I decided to move to another counter (he was still not aware of my presence).

About 30 minutes later, after eating with my wife at the food court, I went to the package counter to get our bags. This time I found our neighbor sitting near the area. What's he doing here, we wondered, our unusual home and, after examining our guts, I noticed a car pull over next to our house. Guess who it was?

Events like this do not happen often. Is this what you call serendipity? Is there something paranormal about this incident? What's he doing here? He should have gone simply forgot everything and treat it as just another day in the mall?

RICKY

The series of coincidences you mentioned is, indeed, very interesting and intriguing. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung called such events synchronicity, not serendipity, which is similar to it.

Synchronicity was defined by Jung as "the simultaneous occurrence of two unrelated but meaningful events." Serendipity, on the other hand, means "finding something you need but not looking for it" or "finding by chance."

Bumping into your neighbor four times in one day is indeed strangely random. The meaning of such meetings may become clear to you in the coming days.

It is possible there really is something you were/ to talk about, or to settle, or to do together. I don't know. But since I don't believe in accidents or coincidences, I believe the meaning of such meetings will reveal itself in some future date.

Just be alert to be aware of the signs or signals.

Intrigued

Here's an e-mail from Jhoanna of Cagayan de Oro:

I just finished reading your book on synchronicity, karma and reincarnation. I am so intrigued with the concepts you presented that I am torn between being lost and disturbed.

Anyway, as you mentioned, you were the "Golden One" and you said the people we met in this lifetime were also the people we met in the past. It made me wonder who I was then.

You had a very important role as the Golden One in the past. Where could we have met before that made us meet again in this lifetime? I am asking you this question and yet I am scared that you might give me answers... Do I make sense?

JHOANNA

Thank you for your answers and for your very kind words. I'm glad to know I've had an impact in your life.

As Keeper of Earth's Wisdom is ancient Egypt, I hoarded knowledge and gave it only to the priesthood. I kept the masses of people ignorant. You were probably one of those lesser others I had kept this knowledge and now I am repaying my karmic debt to you and to the rest of the people whom I had kept unaware of the truth.

It is up to you whether to accept or reject these teachings. I leave them to be true. But each must decide for himself or herself what is true for him/her.

I hope this explanation helps. Thanks for your interest in my work. Your inner journey has only just begun.

Tips for luxury shoppers

LEICA Corpo's top price Nomma bag in sale (tan/pink [kuti], Nomma wannabe bag [left], Bottega Veneta continental Pompei wallet

SEASONAL SHOPPERS LIKE LEICA Corpo, Camille Fernel, Ellery Cortes, Miguel Ramos, and couple Nikita and Kim Arenas, Maybank Platinum Card holders all, offer helpful tips for fellow shoppers.

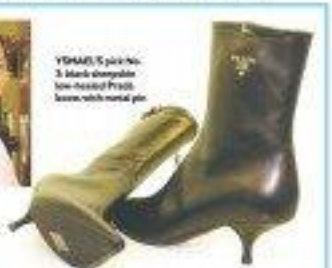
Fashionistas Corpo suggests brands that are dependable and to take good care of any expensive purchase. A pair of Gucci pumps, a Nonna Salvina Salvaya hand-bag, a Victoria Bag (a sale fashion) and a Bottega Veneta Continental Pompei wallet are just some items on her list.

For dad and seasonsayor Ismael, a Borgese Bonita white bag, gold Gucci eyewear, lambskin Prada boots, a Gerry blue belt bag, a Brunei brown suede jacket for last-loved Louis and a Rolex sapphire white Gucci stainless steel timer/lover. She says, though she has a budget, she often exceeds that for the family.

Camera says he lets his wife take care of the Christmas shopping. Since it's Christmas, the time to let go of some strings for the sake of giving, he does not worry too much about the budget.

A socialized scholar like Carrera, Ramos says, though it may not be necessary to give something during Christmas, if one does it should be something the recipient will truly appreciate.

CHEF Cecille Fernel



YSMAEL'S pick No. 3: black steeppable low-heeled Prada boots with metal pin

Shoppers like Corpo, Ismael, Camera, Ramos and the Arenas rely on their Maybank Platinum MasterCard as they don't just get a generous credit limit but also world-class privileges including benefits and rewards, local and international air miles, and a 24/7 exclusive customer assistance hotline. Maybank Platinum MasterCard also has wide merchant acceptability.

The sound of fitness

From page C1

a portable music source while walking or cycling.

If you listen to music during your outdoor workouts, be sure to keep the volume low so you can hear the cars speeding by. Also, be aware that the speed of the music will dictate the pace at which you walk or cycle. Your body will unconsciously respond to the beat.

You can buy music made specifically to walking or cycling at websites like power-music.com, workoutmusic.com and aerobicmusic.com.

Group exercise music speed plays a big role in injury prevention. For example, step aerobics music that is too fast can adversely affect the biomechanics of the whole body, eventually causing problems in the lower back, knees and body. The same goes for kickboxing. Shredders and others are also susceptible.

Music should be fast enough to challenge these participants but not so fast that proper alignment and execution are sacrificed. Step aerobics should be done to the speed of 124-130 beats per minute while kickboxing is safe at 132-145 beats per minute.

Caveat: excessive music can also damage your hearing if played too loudly. Hearing loss doesn't happen overnight. It is seldom painful and it is cumulative. It can maybe going deaf without realizing it.

Ideal volume

IDEA, the International Association for Fitness Professionals, says music volume should be kept below 90 decibels and the instructor's voice below 100 decibels.

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), normal conversation ranges 60-70 decibels, so shots clock going off two feet from your ear is about 80 decibels, a chain saw is 100, and a jet plane takeoff is a rock concert may reach 120. Both ISEA and ASHA recommend using a sound level meter to gauge exercise rooms to monitor the decibel level.

Since most fitness centers do not own a sound level meter, here is a practical way to tell if the music is too loud. Before going to class, set a radio at the lowest volume possible with the words still understandable. After the class, check if you can still understand the words at that volume. If not, you are probably damaging your hearing.

Inform your gym that the music is too loud or use earplugs in class.

Note: Yoga Manila will host a series of Ashtanga workshops by Chie Hirose Jan 9-13. Hirose was a student of the K. Pattabhi Jois, modern day guru of the Ashtanga yoga system, and the Guanzul. Call 09.17.5229504 or e-mail yogamanila@gmail.com.

Visit www.mindpantheon.info

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EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Basic ab crunch

THE CLASSIC ABDOMINAL exercise strengthens the straight muscle (rectus abdominis) and its agonist muscle (internal obliques). Timely interval obliques help keep your back strong.

Equipment
Yoga mat

Exercise technique
1. Keep your feet about 10 inches away from your buttocks.
2. Put both hands behind your head.
3. Initiate the movement by contracting the abdominal muscles to bring the ribcage and pelvis closer to each other.
4. Your head, neck and shoulders will automatically come up off the floor.
5. Slowly lower to an inch off the floor. Repeat.

Performance tips
1. You should feel like an accordion—folding in the middle as the ribcage and hips come closer to each other.
2. Exhale as you execute the crunch; inhale as you return to starting position.
3. Keep your neck and shoulders relaxed.
4. Avoid thrusting your head forward as you start the crunch. Get the power for the movement from the abdominal muscles.
5. Step your elbows diagonally to your sides—keep them away from your face—to avoid pulling on your neck.
6. Keep your chin about a fist distance from your chest. If you look up at the ceiling, your head is too far back. If you look at your chest, your head is too far forward. You should be looking through your legs a little below your knees.

Repetitions
Do 15 slow repetitions.

Promises, promises

ANOTHER YEAR ENDS, A NEW ONE BEGINS. What is it about endings and beginnings that put us in a reflective, and ultimately resolution-driven mood?

Ma B's are invoked to reestablishing the self, those B's you have not kept promises made each time you welcome a new year, it's never too late.

Retrieve

Reconstruction means rebuilding something that has either suffered, like a body that is overworked or neglected. Loosen your old list and revisit it. Go over every item and evaluate your performance against expectations. If you never made a list, now is as good a time as any to start.

Review

Scan your old list. See how much or how little you accomplished and what should be moved to your new list. Look at new ways to improve your resolutions.

Rewrite

Sit down in a comfortable corner of your room. Close your eyes for a minute or two. Seek guidance before you prepare your new list and let the spirit move you in your words.

A tip to remember is to set categories: body, mind, spirit, or look good, feel good, do good; or, to be more specific: health, career, love. Whatever terms most meaning-ful, take it. You may wish to limit yourself to what is doable, set a timeline or deadline.

Renew

The nature and success of all relationships is supposed to reflect your relationship with yourself. Stop for a moment and ask yourself: "How good am I to myself?"

In his book "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success," Deepak Chopra says if you have insecurities over money, careers, beauty and others in your life, choose one something about your own nature. The key is to work on that till you feel renewed.

Take a good look at yourself. If you see totally done, then there is no other way but up. If you see midway between your dreams and their manifestation, then there is also no other way but up.

One can only change if one believes. Go believe that you can and you will have all you believe in. You can reinvent yourself.

Revive

Dreams can only soar when you give them wings. If you've been a dreamer but you have put on hold, let it take flight. Give it the freedom of expression it requires to manifest. Working towards love, adventure, ideal, career is just an intention away. It's will contribute to your personal growth, then it has to become a reality.

Reward

If you have not rewarded yourself for your good deeds, do it now. Assuming you have done so, know that, for example, a healthier lifestyle has its rewards, too. Have more energy, better complexion, general good health.

While on this subject, here are reward suggestions:

1. Do that one thing you've long wanted to do for yourself whenever it may be. Perhaps it is to go parasailing over Boracay, changing the color of your hair, taking up voice lessons or performing in a stage play (or your imagination can take over).

2. Practical kindness. Start by doing acts of kindness to yourself and then to others.

3. Every day, compliment yourself before the mirror. Find something you consider admirable in yourself.

As your attitude changes, so does your mood and so do your actions, and finally so will your life.

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

Keep in mind six B's if you plan to reconstruct yourself this new year

New year's tip

Welcome newness into your health regimen by adding another fruit or vegetable like pineapple and broccoli. Both have immune-boosting nutrients.

New year's dip

Soak in a tub of bubbles. Yes, have a bubble bath. Add more zing by throwing in lemon slices. Great skin softener and mood lifter.

2007 affirmation

"I am my own best promise to myself."
Love and light!

SPECIAL holiday wine box for premium organic wines from Healthy Options

A journey to good health

EATING ALL-NATURAL, ORGANIC AND additive-free food may seem like a tall order but it can be done. Healthy Options managing director Rosemylin says it also needs a commitment to change one's lifestyle, specially that one's purse.

Five servings of fruits and vegetables daily provide the system with all the vitamins, nutrients, disease-fighting anti-oxidants and body-cleansing fiber. Water is better than empty sodas and powdered juices. Meals with healthy natural ingredients have long-term benefits compared to cheaper, more convenience fare. Avoid.

Six new Healthy Options healthful alternatives to food, drinks and personal-care products can help jump-start people's journey to good health.

Healthy Options continues to offer the gift of wellness in festively designed gift bags and boxes.

Watercolor master Edgar Doctor's specially commissioned work appears on the boxes and bags heading to every single bottle of organic wine or tea bags or bottles for Organic Harvest, a set of natural and organic products. Doctor's artwork depicts the Philippines' festive Yuletide season.

You can get a customer assistant to help you put together a "Create Your Own Gift Pack" bag or box. Or give the convenience and hassle-free Healthy Options Gift Cards in P250, P500 and P1,000 denominations.

A P1,000 minimum total purchase entitles you to one Healthy Options art calendar featuring paintings by Doctor and Jing Abel, inspired token-motifs created by Lizanne Dy-Liacco.

Healthy Options has branches at: LS, Shangri-la Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong; Rustan's Supermarket, Makati City; 2/L Festival Supermall, Filinvest, Alabang; G/F Ayala Center, Cebu City; LG/F, SM City, North Edsa; 2/F, SM City Manila; Greenhill, Ayala Center, Makati City; 2/F, SM Megamall B, Mandaluyong City; SM Pampanga, SM Sta. Rosa, Laguna; GF Mall of Asia and GM Clark. Visit www.healthyoptions.com.ph.

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BODIMATE, IS A WORKOUT PRODUCT that helps increase the rate of calorie-burning during a workout.

By enhancing and accelerating heat production, it makes you sweat more, which results in the burning of more calories. Sweating also helps eliminate toxins from the body.

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FUN SNAPS FROM 2006

NOT ALL PLAY-ACTING. Real-life sweethearts Judy Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo starve up behind the cameras during the shoot of "Basic, Kasal, Kasalo." PDI's Nonoy Haroldada took these hot shots.

MMFF: What exactly was there to be festive about?

By Anna Leah Sarabia
Correspondent

I HAD NOT SEEN SO MUCH violence in the Metro Manila Film Festival until now.

I'm talking about senseless, bloody gun killings where the victims are clueless, vulnerable and totally helpless women and young people—and authorities who are completely incompetent, indifferent, or too corrupt to protect them against dastards, vampires, ghosts and gayabos.

If this battered is symbolic of our national state of mind and not just the film industry's rowdiry in slaughterhouses, there is a need for collective purging in this paranoid mind.

No one can save women and children who live far away from neighbors, where ghastly first-crime birds, specially when the men are working abroad. No one bothers to explain how the police would allow passengers to be torn apart by a monster in a train terminal.

How much fear and hopelessness do we as a people feel nowadays? Is this the reason the audiences look forward to the annual circus of flying superheroes, masked marauders on horseback, and grand-dining fairies?

Bright spot

At least a few of the superheroes are female or gay. Note, too, that the one entry with a gay lead casts strong women as the underdogs.

Looks like once upon a time in the Orient Age at last an gender issues are sort-corrected, except that it's gay men fighting emancipation to save a, well, masculine man.

REVIEW

Back in Metro Manila urban life, two festival entries try to outline more flexible scenarios of young people in love. Arriving at the ideal positions of couple bond isn't easy, whether you are Chinese-Filipino or Filipino-Filipino. Problems in, amenities and bright young women are paired with tongue-tied half-wits who aren't

MMFF: D1

POPS Fernandez and Eraño Padilla in "ExmuTanzeman". In these scene characters with super-powers meet a woman.

What stars will dare do for the first time in '07

WHY NOT TRY DOING SOME. Doing this 2007 that you've never done before? At any time space goes, "If you're not living on the edge, then you are occupying too much space. Ride it!"

Here are what some stars will dare to do this year for the very first time. Then it's your turn. I double dare you to have the most adventurous year ever!

MARK HERRAS: "To have a GF (si pangmatagalan talaga)."

CARMINA VILLAROEL: "If I were still single (10 yrs. ago drdng. But since I'm a mother already and my brain are still small, I can't die!"

JED MADELA: "To get lost the movies. Preferably a horror or suspense film. I'd want to visit any dalay small yet significant yoka."

JANICE DE BELEN: "I still can't think of one thing I haven't done. A woman I've been through it all so. But before trying anything, I ask myself two questions.... 1. Can I afford it? 2. Will I die if I don't do it? If works every

DOLLY WOOD
Dolly Ann Carvajal

time.

DIETHER OCAMPO: "Produce an indie film that would be considered an important part of global cinema history."

VICKI BELO: "To have a baby!"

JEREMY MARQUIS: "To stay single (though I might jealously). I'm sure I'll get married to someone. I mean going through another break-up."

GIL DELOS: "To build a house and write a book."

MARVIN AGUSTIN: "Go all over Europe and travel to India. I also want to co-write a script and do a full-length digital movie."

IZA CALZADO: "To have a baby boy! Anya is turning 2 so

The colors of the season captured in the sparkling festival of lights!
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DID YOU KNOW...

Over 300 vie for top plum

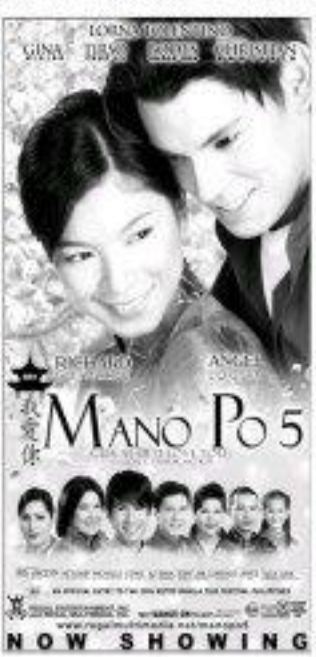
LOS ANGELES—More than 300 films are eligible for the coveted Best Picture prize at next year's Oscars, organizing academy Awards organizers said Thursday.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said 307 feature films were qualified for the top honor, which will be handed out in Hollywood on Feb. 25.

To be eligible for the 79th Academy Awards, the films must open in a commercial theater in Los Angeles County by midnight on Dec. 31 and run for a minimum of seven consecutive days.

The Oscar nominations will be announced on Jan. 23.

Among the early front-runners are Martin Scorsese's crime thriller "The Departed"; Alejandro González Iñárritu's drama "Babel"; Clint Eastwood's "Letters from Iwo Jima"; Stephen Frears' "The Queen" and musical "Dreamgirls". AFP



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Precious lessons that stars have taught

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

These acting greats showed range, depth and scope

WHEN I JOINED THE THEATER and entertainment fields, I wasn't prepared for the challenges that came my way. It's a good thing that a number of stars were only too willing to help me find my way through. In the name of love that confirmed me, by way of their advice or simply by example.

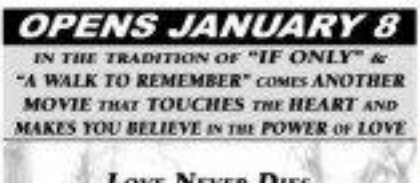
As an actor, I learned a lot about love for the theater from Ilaw and Daisy Avellana. They had spent their lives acting in and/or directing plays and films without much recompense, and yet they forged on, their stars dazzled as high as ever.

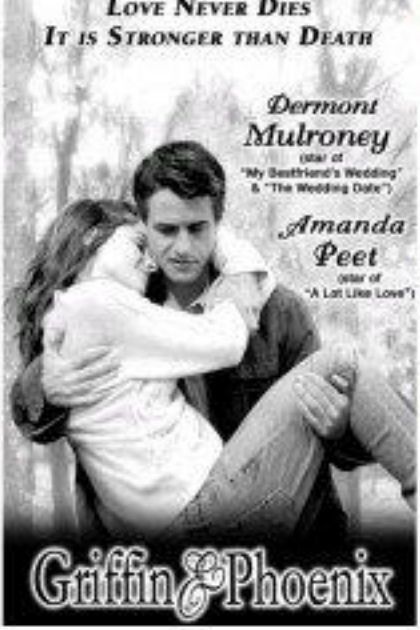
From my fellow actors, I learned the most from the likes of Sharon, Sid Hidden, Ching Doddoliguin, Aurelio Estanislao, Zenaida Amador, Nikka Dionisio, Tommy Abuel, Bolgar Cruz, Gerald Madrid, Mitch Valdes and Teddy Tabar.

Each in his or her own unique way, these acting greats showed me the range, depth and scope that the best and most daring characters could reach out for. When they performed, the edgy or severe blazed with life and with his/her artistry, and viewers were moved, inspired, illuminated and transformed.

On television, Fr. Jaime B. Bautista, S.J., taught me how much could be achieved with very few resources—and a lot of creativity, determination and just plain hard work.

No excuses! Produce! Stop complaining!—That's the spirit.





Just can't get enough

RENEE ZELLWEGER

MMFF: What ex

t me

...running grandchildren of a life saved in front of the camera and beyond. From Eddie Romero, that talent can flourish and must be put to use even into an actor's 80s—and after!

From Sharon Cuneta, that assuring you's brave on one's shower inside cuky—and lickes.

From Vilma Santos, that you can be your own worst enemy—but, when push comes to shove, sheer talent will always emerge triumphant!

NGC's Watch and Win promo

The National Geographic Channel's Watch and Win promo invites viewers to watch NGC's "Inside" series and log on to answer questions and answer questions related to each episode, and include their personal details. "Inside" is a documentary show that gives viewers a sneak peek into the huge amount of work put into organizing some of the world's biggest events. Watch "Inside" every Monday at 9 p.m. The promo ends on Dec. 31.

Remaining episodes: Jan. 1, "Hong Kong's Big Bang" (over a half million tourists are expected to join viewers million Hong Kong residents to celebrate the New of the Dog); Jan. 8, "Spiral World" (each year, thousands of bravehearts dare make a pilgrimage to the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah to go as fast as their wheels allow).

ugh of Costa Rica

...and Brad Pitt were a Colombian refugee family as ...ican Day in the Costa Rican capital.

...Norton said a horse threw him off while he was galloping before filming a scene for the movie, directed by John Curran, which was shot entirely in China.

"One of those horses climbed me off pretty badly," the 37-year-old actor told AP Radio News in a telephone interview. "I don't want to go in like three places. I broke my hand. I broke three vertebrae in my back."

"I felt like my back was horribly wrenched but I sort of assumed I was OK, and I didn't actually find out I had broken it until I went to Hong Kong," he said. "I crashed my 1995, 11th and especially my 12th discuss motorbikes."

Though he generally keeps close profile, Norton said he was swept...

...five minutes later I felt him creeping up, and he looked at me for a long time and he said, 'Ugly Chik!' It added me that somewhere way out there, there was this kid who loved 'Ugly Chik.'" Norton said. AP

EDWARD HORTON

actly . . .

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7 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
8 SUPER NOYPI
9 TATLONG NAWAWA
10 LIGALIG

ERMITA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 LIGALIG
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 MANO PO 5
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

METRO EAST
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 MANO PO 5
7 LIGALIG
8 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

NOVALICHES
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

CITISQUARE MALABON
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH

STA. ROSA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

LIPA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 MANO PO 5

DASMARINAS
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 MANO PO 5

ANGELES
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

IMUS
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
5 LIGALIG
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

STARMILLS
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5
5 LIGALIG
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

BACOLOD
1 MANO PO 5
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 THE MATRIX STORY
6 SUPER NOYPI

ILOILO
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
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VICKY MORALES DIETHER OCAMPO CARMINA VILLAROEL

What stars will dare . . .

From page 01

ized"

CHRISTINA BAUTISTA: "I will learn how to play a musical instrument."

GINA ALAJAR: "To go on a reality-talk show."

FRANCIS MAGUNDAYAO: "To release a book about photographs to fulfill that is music, publishing and fashion. I plan to launch the book, album and my clothing line in one day by holding a fun concert."

PIA GUANIO: "Not to complain, I've been a victim[illegible] I have no reason to whine."

JOLINA DE ROSE: "I want to focus on motherhood. It's about time!"

JODI GUEVARRA (Side A): "To be myself—original and effortless. That would be a first in my entire career."

EUGENE CRUZ: "Take up culinary lessons so I can cook my own dishes for the barrooms that Sidney and I plan to open soon."

MARK ANTHONY FERNANDEZ: "To bring my kids to Hong Kong Disneyland."

GENE PADILLA: "To go on a weekend vacation with my husband. Every time we had babies, we've never been away from home together."

PERSONAL

Dennis "If" for changing my world for the better. Wish you around, I know it will be a year of vocation.

E-mail: starstruck@abs-cbn.ph@yahoo.com

Pinoys love their rock bands

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

TWO SEPARATE GIGS HELD ON THE SAME weekend severely tiffered contending rivers to rose people connect with today's local bands.

Friday night in Mamonsuki, Pasig, the 4th Pinoy Rock Blast was winding up its "Kilyo Tour" with Queso, Bellrock, the Jones, Orbitoids, Pinoy Kids, Imago, Sandwich, Parokya Ni Edgar and Bamboo.

A crowd of mostly young professionals filled the open-air square between rows of restaurants, where chef were kept busy with non-stop orders of food and drinks.

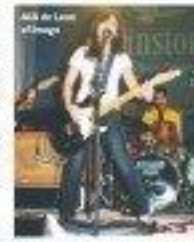
Onstage, Alex Abaya and Mod Universidad re-engage the audience in light fusion. But this was a crowd that probably went out every weekend to unwind, often by watching bands and drinking with friends and colleagues. Every now and then they would react to the band' jokes but generally they looked disturbed. It still a testament to the band's performances.

But everyone was strolling signatures, even as Abaya's gorgeous girls constantly strike the stage with alluring styles, even parks, of its products. But the non-romantic chilling a rabbit of several band smoke was annoying enough to provoke a confrontation, yet the irritant was ignored when the bands started combing out for the music.

The Jones rounded out tight. Vocalist Jett Pangan seems to be getting better with the passage of time. The band has been around for 20 years, but the fiery energy of drummer Jun-Jun Lorenzo complemented by the steady rhythms of bassist Bodjie Zabala and burning lines of guitarist Francis Reyes, showed it was running on a powerful second wind.

Watching Urbandub, the Pinoy Kids, Imago and Sandwich gave credence to the emergence of more female musicians on the scene. Imago's vocalist Ida de Leon and Sandwich's Jamie Marie Academia radiated charm and confidence that matched their performance levels.

Speaking of Sandwich, this is one band that has managed to lock up a movie in every gig—spawned on by the rabid, drunk presence of vocalist Raimund Marasigan. At the Mamonsuki, he threw the laid back audience, many of them wooly from drinking, to their up.



Alex de Leon of Imago

Like Beatlemania

Sunday Dec. 17, at Cinema 3 of GH Greenhills, a Sandwich organized by the Federation of Parents and Teachers Association of Las Piñas Institute Symposia with four amateur bands at their acts.

High school was in the air, as laughters, deliberations and high school kids loitered outside the theater, all of them dressing at the same time and looking like they were about to see the Beatles.

Imagine the frenzied faces of fans at the height of Beatlemania, combined with the most ear-splitting shrieks, and you have a complete picture of the crowd at Sandwich. They came to rock not only for Symposia, but also for the opening acts, most of which were classmates from the same institution.

There are the names like Aquis, Adrenaline, Aqui in Jhoe, Bubble and the Bubbleheads and Super Super. None of them had probably ever played before such a huge crowd, and it was obvious how many of the band members trembled.

A few, however, showed promise, such as the excited and loud guitarist of Aqui in Jhoe, Carl Ribardo, the guitarist, and the drum and rock-star stance that would come in handy if and when he actually manages that he should always be conscious of the volume level of his amps. Or his lead lines or he broad. (Or none be really hated down in a matter of practice by the sound technicians!)

When Symposia took the stage, all hell broke loose.

The shrill voices of female fans were replaced by cramped people hoarse cheering.

Bamboo, as you high, is most young people get their taste of enjoying a music scene. But he become better than any global exciting band.

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Cerrudo performs for typhoon victims

"TONIGHT WE SOAR," a RINE, Il concert Pot the victims of Typhoon Reming, features Rodito Cerrudo with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra on Feb. 9 at the Manila Marriott and Feb. 23 at the Cuneta's Araw of Manila celebration.

Melanj in Manila

Melanj on for is a combination of Las Vegas and Broadway—so to. The show will be presented in Cebu Jan. 17 to 21 at the CPU Gym. Manila performances are scheduled Feb. 1 to 11 at the Rizal Araneta Stadium.

The cast includes El Olympian, internationally renowned stars, US Junior National competitors, local performers and dancers and young singing stars.

Auditionees are the Bamboy and Kapuso foundlings. Call 713-4907.

Letterman back

The Letterman returns to the Philippines! This month for a series of shows that concludes with a major concert on Jan. 12, 8 p.m., at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao, Quezon City.

"The Letterman... Show!" series opens with a Zero-show on Jan. 11 at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Ortigas, with the John Lennon and Tim Tolkmitten.

Other shows are slated on Jan. 13, Clark Expo, Pampanga; Jan. 14, St. La Salle, Bacolod City; Jan. 15, Cebu Waterfront Hotel, Cebu City; Jan. 16, NCCC Mall, Davao City; and Jan. 17, Limketkai Mall, Cagayan de Oro City.

Call 911-6888.

Suzuki Kids

There is 12-year-old Suzuki Music Kids entertain families at the malls this holiday season on Jan. 7, 4 p.m., at SM Aleabete Mall.

Piano prodigy Oliver Inlongo performs for the benefit of the Ate Isabel's Congress in May

BAMBOO CERRUDO

2007.

On Jan. 14, 2-5 p.m. at SM North Edsa, the Suzuki Kids ensemble participant children at the Grand Marseilleveyo "Pagsasalong ng Lahi" Call 724-4705.

Tomorrow

Join A with Midnight Connection at BJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

SHOW TIME

January 5
BJ 'n Friends with Mesmerados at BJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

January 7
Piano prodigy Oliver Inlongo at CP Alabastro Hall, 4 p.m. Call 724-0705.

January 8
Elvis Night featuring BJ, Edgar Ophils, Sonic Sandoe and Lito Jauregui at BJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

January 9
Join A with Dido Advincula at BJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

January 10
Join A with Midnight Connection at BJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

January 12
The Letterman at the Araneta Coliseum, 8 p.m.